

By the same Authors

THE FILM ANSWERS BACK

IN DEFENCE OF MOVIE

DEAR JOE (LETTERS TO STALIN)

THE SHAME AND DISGRACE OF COLONEL BLIMP

BERNARD SHAW AMONG THE INNOCENTS

THE WORLD IS MY CINEMA

By
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CHAPTER ONE

EVERY USEFUL INVENTION, whether it is the power loom, the steam engine, electricity or the aeroplane, has been a blessing not unmixed with tribulation to mankind. Every invention helps you to do a certain thing very much faster than you did it before; more comfortably, more cleanly. Any important new contrivance has immediate social repercussions on every aspect of social living.

The cinema is one of the most important inventions of all, for it concerns itself not so much with our material needs (except as a by-product) as with the appeal to our minds, the stirring of our emotions, our social instincts and our individual passions.

The cinema, though its main function is to provide relaxation and entertainment, influences minds, millions of them. Those minds in turn motivate action according to the way the minds have been conditioned. So that the world we are striving for, may depend upon the kind of outlook on life this most powerful mind-conditioning instrument in the world, the cinema, may disseminate.

But wait a moment. Surely, you will say, there are more time-honoured methods of influencing minds than the cinema. There is the printed word in literature, history, the novel and the poem. There is the spoken word from the public platform, the pulpit, the dramatic stage and the radio. All these methods have been used, and will be used even more extensively in the future. Yet the cinema, and soon the televised cinema, must inevitably take the lead.

Why?

Because the film acts much faster than the spoken or printed word. Whenever the spoken word impinges upon the ear, or the printed word upon the eye, it is received in the mind as sounds and symbols. These go through a very elaborate sorting out, sifting and straightening up process before they convey a picture of the world to you. It is rather like the system of telegraphy used during the war to prevent messages reaching the enemy; the 'system which sends a clear message, "scrambled" and then has the communication "unscrambled" at the receiving end. The process may be as quick as lightning, but it is complex just the same.

The cinema has followed the path of every other invention by making what you did before a lot easier and quicker. The older

forms of communication—alphabet, print and speech—will always be necessary, but the picture of the outer world which the earlier inventions convey to your mind is obviously incomplete and not nearly so lasting as the actual, visual world in motion given in the film. It is therefore understandable why the cinema has for so long been despised by the intelligentsia. The film impinges upon the *pre-alphabetical* faculties of man. But to despise the film because of that, is rather like despising an aeroplane because it does not climb a hill like a car. Many leaders of opinion, and even many of our own film makers, have derided the better type of American film because it does not evoke quite the same pleasurable responses in their minds that books do.

Why, in heaven's name, should it? If the power loom were geared to the same speed and production rate as the hand loom there would be no rational purpose in using the power loom, let alone troubling to invent it. The film plays upon a different set of pleasurable strings in the human consciousness than does the book or the stage play. The film *by-passes* the painfully acquired human faculty of reading and writing, and makes a straight line to the *primal* powers of seeing moving reality, by flashing its appeal directly to the primal instincts and emotions.

It is not too much to say that a civilisation cannot exist unless it understands (and acts upon the understanding) that the *primal* passions and emotions must not be allowed to run riot. The *primal* emotions must be noted, guided, and kept from breaking loose and creating havoc among men. The very foundations of a future world civilisation may depend upon whether this emotion-stirring instrument, the film, is understood and made to work for our good.

The film in relation to the previous methods of communication—speech, print and static picture—is what the aeroplane is to the older forms of earthbound and seaborne transport. Films and television are the obvious and natural cultural counterparts to this age of air power and transport. We cannot imagine the one without the other, any more than we can imagine the Elizabethan age without the printing press, without the work of Shakespeare and the Authorised Version of the Bible. They are all of one piece with that age.

The close links between the film and the aeroplane are truly extraordinary. The film, like the aeroplane, is new, having been invented, introduced and widely developed within the memory of many still living. Like the aeroplane, which transcends and branches away from the whole evolutionary past of earth-bound forms of transport, the film transcends—or rather *by-passes*—a faculty in man which has taken him hundreds of thousands of years to develop. That is, the faculty of picking out written and printed symbols on paper, and then re-creating a mental picture of the world by means of them—the gift of reading and writing.

With the aeroplane at his disposal, man is no longer fettered to

the earth's surface and to the restrictions of the earth's topography. The film, too, wisely used, offers us a new freedom. For the first time in history, man may communicate with man across class, caste, colour, language and State barriers with no mystifying and much differing printed symbols to stand in the way. Just as the aeroplane will make for greater intimacy with other nations in the years to come, so the film, if properly handled, will make for greater understanding between the nations.

We have to stress that "if." If properly handled. If properly used. Everything on earth is either good or bad, according to the way it is used and by whom. A razor is meant for shaving, but in the hands of a lunatic it may be a lethal weapon. The aeroplane can unify nations, but in the hands of mentally afflicted homicides, like the Nazis and Fascists, it can destroy nations. The film has a greater power for creating understanding among peoples than any other medium. By the same token it is capable of spreading greater confusion than any other medium, if it is allowed to remain the plaything of self-seeking, self-interested playboys.

Here is another analogy. We know that with the coming of the aeroplane the whole theory of warfare underwent a profound modification. It was discovered that the 'plane did not, indeed, replace the earthbound tank, the gunner and the infantryman, but that the older Services had to be placed in a new relationship with the new air weapon. With air cover and air supremacy assured, all the rest is added unto you. As soon as the land and sea forces are (necessarily) keyed to the air weapon, then the conditions are ripe for a combined and successful operation: not before. The crucial point is that air power, achieved by the least earthbound, the fastest and least restricted instrument, demands a high degree of selflessness, responsibility and team spirit among the crew: the greatest skill and courage. The right use of the dominant weapon—the aeroplane—sets the key, the pace, the method, the outlook and the will to victory.

The film is in an extraordinarily similar position. It, too, demands, though it seldom receives it in British fictional product, the highest sense of responsibility, the subordination of self for the benefit of the many, as well as the most closely integrated collective team spirit and the greatest skill and tenacity.

The aesthetes and the disdainful film critics bring to the film the kind of aesthetic standards which properly belong to the static arts, painting, sculpture, all forms of printed literature, music and the drama. The pleasures derived from the contemplation of a painting or a sculptured head, or from the reading of a printed masterpiece of literature, cannot possibly be used as a measuring rod to judge a film by. That is where the critics and the aesthetes go awry. For, in trying to uphold their system of pleasures which belong to an earlier cultural epoch, they are attempting to establish an impossible equilibrium between widely separate forms of

communication, an equilibrium which the people, exercising their unspoken but eloquent franchise at the box-office know as being impossible.

There is pleasure in the exercise of walking through a pleasant country lane on an autumn day. There is pleasure also in the sensation of flight. The first demands personal effort only. The second demands personal effort, plus extraneous, i.e., mechanical power. Both are enjoyments, but on different planes, are of different character, and can only be experienced each in their own appropriate time, place and circumstance. The one enjoyment cannot be measured in terms of the other, any more than the moving picture can be judged by the standards of the static painting or the printed book.

In the realm of transport the aeroplane represents the highest point in an evolution which has always sought to link man with man, tribe with tribe, and nation with nation. It started long, long ago with shanks' pony. Then came the pack horse, the horsed rider, the chariot, the stage coach, the steam and electric train, and the motor car. The coming of air transport does not mean that the other methods of transport are wiped off the slate. It does mean, however, that the older forms of transit can no longer receive the same emphasis in the general scheme of things.

The aeroplane is the dominant in transport. The film is the dominant in communication. Speech, verbal imagery, printed literature, the stage, the static picture and the sculptured form can no longer receive the same emphasis and stress in the general scheme. Everything in the line of evolution before the film arrived, must, now that the film is here, be integrated and modified into a new general synthesis. The film takes in, and absorbs, all the other arts and transforms them into something new. Something quite unexpected, something to be resented, derided and even feared by those who understand only the earlier arts. It is a commonplace of history that men have always opposed with intensity the thing which was new and difficult to comprehend.

In recent years it has been repeatedly stated in public, that upon air transport, and the use we make of it, will depend the future prosperity of the peoples of this island. The same is true of the film. Our ideas on the nature of the film medium will have to be recast, or we shall never have a British world quality film. Without a quality film penetrating to every people in the world, America will continue to retain the major hold upon the world screens. In that event, the world will continue to follow the American cultural lead. The only way to tie with that lead is to produce a quality film—not the kind of stuff we are turning out today. If the interests of the people of Britain, the Empire and, indeed, the whole world, are to be unified and consolidated, a truly British world marketable film is a paramount necessity.

CHAPTER TWO

AMERICA PRODUCES eighty-five to ninety per cent. of the world's total film output. It must be obvious, therefore, that at the moment the British film is, quantitatively, nowhere as a world force. The American film is the only national film which is international. High-pressure business methods are not the only explanation for American dominance in films. No amount of high pressure from above could feed the world market if that market—that is, the plain man from Wigan or Peru, from Zanzibar or Melbourne, in Chungking or Zurich—were not avid for the American product in preference to his native own.

American ways of thought, American customs, American history, American ideas on music and the dance, on clothes and housing, on cars and kitchens; American standards of material comfort and hygiene, of physical fitness, cleanliness and beauty; the rough and ready moral standards of the American Westerns of crime punished and virtue rewarded, have gripped and fascinated the imagination of millions the wide world over.

All this is not a bad thing. If the Americans, through their films, offer a vision of a world where men are manly and more handsome, and women are more comely than in real life, there is a deep psychological reason for people preferring to see life that way.

The spread of American ideas throughout the world, far from being a bad thing, has been an incentive to do as well as the Americans in achieving a good social life. But where do we come into this world picture? How can Britain take her place in future world counsels if only America's voice and picture is heard and seen on the world's screen? What's wrong with us? Why are our British films so dull, so parochial, so devitalised, so uninspiring; so divorced from all the vital, creative movements that are stirring in Britain today that it takes an Act of Parliament to force them into our cinemas, while countries who are under no such compulsion often refuse British films at the end of a barge pole? Were we to possess films as virile in impulse as that which inspired those valuable "few" at the Battle of Britain, who could say what leadership this country could exert upon the world?

A solution to this problem must be found. It is not a question

that concerns the film industry alone. Our pre-eminence in other industrial fields abroad depends a great deal upon what other nations know about us, the things we use and the lives we lead. Trade follows the film, as the Americans have proved.

A first step to that solution is to try to discover what characterises the present world product, the American film. Here we come to a rather significant point. The most important aspect of the American film is, that as a national expression it has an Anglo-Saxon cultural base. The fact that America is a nation of many nationalities obtrudes itself hardly at all in the American film. The dominant language and culture of America is English, and the English language carries with it the preceding traces of its evolution which at certain peaks promulgated the brotherhood of man and "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

So overpoweringly strong is this Anglo-Saxon cultural dominance in America, so great a hold has the English language had upon the mixed influx that constitutes the American nation, that English ways of life and thought permeate the lives and thoughts of the whole populace.

Now the extraordinary thing is that this very realm, is the mother of that American culture which, through the film, has encompassed the globe. England is the parent stock from which America has sprung. England, therefore could—and should—lead in films. Again let us ask, what is stopping us?

A close examination will reveal at least one of the answers. In the realm of the idea, the difference between England and America is that America has taken over, retained and developed the original expansionist impulse that gave force to Elizabethan England, while we have allowed that impulse, temporarily, to lapse.

As far as the vast masses are concerned, Britain is a cultural colony of America. Four-fifths of the screening time in British cinemas is devoted to American films. Until recently, the pristine forthrightness of Elizabethan culture came back to us in a twentieth century guise, in the foremost American productions. This culture in which a villain was clearly known and shown as a crook, is not one with which the professional film critics had much sympathy. They preferred films to be "adult." What they really meant was senile. They preferred a system of values propounded by the "adult" and "beautiful" and "full of wit" French cinema, the cultural forerunner of Vichy, in which a crook is either excused under some fancy camouflage like "schizophrenia," or is amiably patted on the back for being "witty," or for living on the immoral earnings of women. They preferred a body of advocacy in which moral considerations play no part, in which black is not black but the colour of jaundice with pink and green spots; in which the virtuous have a bad time while the vicious get away with it; in which, in fact, virtue does not pay.

If there is one factor more than any other to explain our backwardness in the making of British films for the world market, it is to be found in this moral squint among some of our intelligentsia at the top. Whereas, in Elizabethan times, cultural leaders like Sir Philip Sydney, Francis Bacon and Shakespeare advocated for their time a moral and positive outlook on life and a belief in ourselves, there is, today, by contrast, among too many of us a deliberate and widespread scepticism and cynicism, a general sourness and negativism. There is a disbelief in ourselves and in our place in the world, and a hardly veiled contempt for the masses among our leaders, which carries with it, naturally, a contempt for the film, the cultural food of the people.

Instead of doing what we did in Elizabeth's day—absorbing and modifying European cultures to *our* pattern, instead of subduing the immoral by the moral, we allow the immoral to dominate the moral in our films. We think it so clever to trail, like sleep-walkers, into worshipping and elevating Continental European ideas. Many of our leading film critics exhort us every Sunday through print and wireless to admire the French films and to despise the American. For years we were solemnly propagandised to revere "The Golden Age of the German Cinema" of the Weimar Republic, and propagated, not by the Germans, but by our own intellectuals. As if there could be anything of lasting value in a film industry which, starting from "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari," in 1919, had nothing to propagate but sheer feelingless, amoral, cold-blooded disintegration, destruction and killing for the sake of killing.

Our "Golden Agers" have yet to learn that whatever is implicit in the "Great" German films is bound to become explicit in real life—in time. They have yet to grasp one of the elementals of psychology: "A suggestion in the mind tends to carry itself out in practice."

Now the question is, how can we build a British film industry when *our eyes are turned to bankrupt Europe for film inspiration?* Surely, a body of ideas in which the seeds of destruction and social disruption is embedded cannot be used for building anything. As well try to build a palace on a foundation of dynamite. It may stand for a while, as the German and French film industries stood—for a while—but there is certainly no possible foundation that way for a world film industry.

Our chief drawback is moral and intellectual, not commercial. We have the sound stages, expensive equipment, technicians, actors, actresses, authors and script writers. There is the Quota Act plus other forms of State subsidy. There are millions of pounds invested in the business. Yet all these avail little, if we ourselves fail to take charge in the realm of the idea. If we allow ourselves, as at present, to be swamped by the backwash of Continental worship of instability and immorality. If we, with the connivance of our film critics and cultural leaders allow French, German and Italian

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culture to make fools of us—and worse. If we forget to become
“masters of our fate, and captains of our soul,” and if we allow
ourselves to slump into the mental and physical morass in which the
rest of Europe has sunk.

CHAPTER THREE

CONSIDER THE NUMBERLESS ALIBIS that have been trotted out by interested parties to excuse the lack of content in British films and their failure on the world market. Insufficient subsidies. Too small Quota. Shortage of film stock. Lack of studio space. Those disagreeable Americans who insist on keeping us out of the American market. The maiden aunt Hays Office of America. The un-understandable British idiom. The alleged slow British tempo. It is because we spend too little and the Americans too much. It is because we spend too much for a restricted market. It's the temperamental artists. It's the want of theatres abroad. It's the lack of publicity. It's the lack of selling organisation, and the latest is the lack of Quota powers in liberated Europe!

Those who put these excuses forward forget these are only the smallest particles of the truth. They studiously avoid the hard core of the truth, which is: that no real attempt either by the business men in this country who put up the money for films, or the "artist-producers" who make them, is being exerted to turn out *world market quality*. They forget the most elementary commercial principle: that if you wish to sell to America, for instance, you must offer product of equal, if not better, quality than the best the American public are used to. The public have the final word, and the American public have no need to do what we in this country have to put up with: accept a fifth of our native film entertainment by Government compulsion.

It is of little use our financial leaders in the film industry putting the cart before the horse, clucking around like industrious hens, appointing public relations officers, starting publicity campaigns, and floating new export companies with little to export except the morals of "Fanny By Gaslight," for which the Hays Office in America rightly refuses an exhibition certificate. Our film chiefs are greatly influenced by their own paid publicity drivel, which tells them that British films are as good as the American. That is exactly how Goebbels won his exaggerated U-boat victories. Self-deception, in time, hits you like a boomerang—as the Germans discovered.

The financial heads in the British film industry are encouraged in this delusion because they have a Government guaranteed fifth of

the home market for themselves. Good, bad or indifferent, British made films have got to be shown in this country to the extent of one out of five. As long as this state of affairs prevails, why need our film makers exert themselves? Surely it is easier to take the line of least resistance and aim at an immediate profit, rather than build on a long-term basis, which is what you would have to do if you were really, sincerely aiming at the world market.

And the artist-producers, the actual makers of the films, where do they stand? The Quota Act protects these people, too. It encourages them to be insular and so-called "artistic." With a clearly defined market to themselves, they can afford to indulge in all sorts of little luxuries, such as nursing the utmost contempt for the American film. By being anti-American in sentiment, they cut themselves adrift from some of the best world market films; they isolate themselves from the only film model worth studying.

Deeply ingrained prejudice against American films is exalted into a principle. From such an attitude of mind, there can be no growth, no progress, no hope for the future of British films. The films being made in Britain are not British at all. They are not a true national expression. The films being made in Britain are made by people whose intellectual allegiances are largely Germanophile, Franco-phile, or Italophile. Since nothing exists in a vacuum, they have to nurse these allegiances to compensate for a strong overdose of America-phobia. The Michael Powell—Emeric Pressburger group have shown they love Germans (see their "49th Parallel" leading to "A Matter of Life or Death"). The Anthony Asquith group know little but French, French attitudes of mind and spirit (see a long list from "French Without Tears" to "Fanny By Gaslight"). The Gainsborough Pictures group show great attachment to Italy and the Italians (see "Madonna of the Seven Moons," typical Italian schizophrenic rubbish, rather reminiscent of recent Italian history—Fascist one minute and anti-Fascist the next).

Despite a terrific barrage of publicity that "British films are getting better and better every day," despite this hypnotic auto-suggestion that British films are going from strength to strength and doing fine (notwithstanding a chronic inability to get a world showing), it is clear that British films are letting us down morally, socially, and in the eyes of the world. We shall describe some of these films in greater detail later to show how that peculiarity of outlook on the part of our film chiefs and film makers stamps itself on our film product. But first it might be well to describe one of the chief encouragements to that derogatory outlook—the Cinematograph Act of 1927, commonly known as the Quota Act.

The Act was passed with the most laudable intentions: to give British film makers a chance to build an industry, so that the Americans may not have the field to themselves. That sounds fine, but observe how it works.

Every one of the five thousand cinemas in this country is compelled, under penalty, to show twenty per cent. British film of the total shown during the year. It started in 1927 at seven-and-a-half per cent., and has been raised from year to year ever since. Every day, every week, every month, every year, for the last twenty years, huge elaborate forms are required to be filled up and sent in to the Board of Trade. Five thousand cinema managers or proprietors of the five thousand cinemas in this country have to exercise their minds and mathematical skill on how many thousand feet of American film under three thousand five hundred feet in length (called shorts) were shown on Sunday. How many feet of American film over three thousand five hundred feet in length (called longs, or features) were shown the same day. Now put down how many feet of British longs and shorts were shown that same Sunday. How many feet of American ("foreign" is the designation) film, both longs and shorts, were shown each day from Monday to Wednesday. How many feet of British film, both longs and shorts, in the same period. How often shown each day. Repeat all particulars and titles of films shown from Thursday to Saturday, longs and shorts, American and British. Enter the official Board of Trade registration number of each film, in each category, long, short, American, British.

Multiply the number of feet by the number of times shown in each day. Add up the total of each day's multiple showing in so many thousands of feet, for the week, in each separate category. Now work out the percentage of British film shown to American in footage. Then start the whole thing all over again the following Sunday for fifty-two weeks in the year and send the result in a pantechnicon to the Board of Trade, so that they may check up to see how often you have broken the law.

And this has been going on in five thousand cinemas every day for twenty years. For what purpose and with what result? The purpose, the original intention of the Act, was quite clear and, indeed, commendable, but the results, from a public point of view, have been truly appalling.

In 1926, before the Quota Act was passed, American films had almost a free run on the British market, even though the then silent films were relatively less expensive to make. The excuse (only partially valid) was made that the war of 1914-1918 had given America an undue start. We were engaged in total war while America, being further away, and coming into the war later, had a vast home market where she could develop her film industry, so that British film makers were quite unable to compete. That was serious, because there was less employment for British film technicians and artists, and the British point of view, the British way of life, was in danger of being removed from the screen not only in Britain but all over the world.

Now at that time there were other British industries demanding

protection too, against foreign goods coming into the country, but in most cases the demand was met by a general tariff on imported goods. Thus the import of goods was restricted by an increase in cost to the consumer, due to a Government imposed import tax. But this kind of general import tax on films was found impracticable.*

The Government, therefore, decided to help the British film-makers most generously. Compulsion was enforced upon American film distributors (renters) in this country, to make and distribute British films up to a certain fixed percentage of their own product in a given year. For instance, if an American renter had 100,000 feet of his own film product registered for distribution in this country, he would be obliged by law either to make or acquire by purchase a currently made British film of, say, 7,500 feet in length. Every cinema in the country had to show a percentage of British film in accordance with the Quota laid down for a given year, and render an account of showings to the Board of Trade in the manner we have just described. The renters, too, are under an obligation to render account to the Board of Trade, explaining what percentage of British films was acquired by them to count as Quota to their own distributed product.

Today, the compulsory showing of British films is one out of five. Four out of five films reach the screen by the ordinary, natural process of commerce, while the fifth arrives only by Government assistance and insistence. Four out of five films arrive by a mass approved, world standard of merit, and the fifth by a Government created (but privately owned) monopoly, and if there is one reason above all others for the thinness, the meanness, the poverty and the lack of social ideas in so many British fictional films, you will find it in this Quota monopoly.

Immediately the Act was passed, companies were floated to take advantage of this indiscriminate Government licence to make films in this country. Many were the abuses and crooked dealings that went on, and millions of pounds were lost by the investing public, money that found its way into the pockets of a few. Today, the British film industry is free from the outright swindling so prevalent at the beginning of the Quota Act, but other abuses remain and why should there not be abuses? The whole history of monopoly shows that it is inseparable from abuse, and the Quota Act is no exception.

It may be well to review in brief the history of State-aided monopoly to see if it holds any lesson for us today. The word "monopoly" is from the Greek and means "exclusive sale." It was applied to specific grants of favoured trading facilities from Parliament and the Crown. By ancient common law, the King could grant to an inventor or to an importer of an invention a temporary

*There is an import duty on negative and positive exposed film, but it is too small to affect the position materially.

monopoly in his invention by letters patent, but grants in restraint of trade were illegal. This was also the law laid down in the first recorded case on monopolies in 1602 and the decision has never been over-ruled:

In the reign of Queen Elizabeth, at a time when trade and industry had to be encouraged to get going, monopolies were granted by the Crown on the strict understanding *that some public benefit was to be derived as a result.* (On this point, we shall show that, far from public benefit, the Quota Act has worked to the public detriment.) In Elizabeth's day, the preamble to every instrument conveying a monopoly grant always stressed and required a public benefit. Yet, despite these strict injunctions and provisions, abuses and scandals occurred so often that many were the heated debates in Parliament for the abrogation of certain monopolies. In the first Parliament of James I, a Committee of Grievances was set up and numerous monopoly grants were cancelled; but as fast as these disappeared others were granted by the King, until there grew up a class of traders who made use of their privileges under the Great Seal to levy extortion on the public. The most notorious among this class was Sir Giles Mompesson, who had to flee the country in 1621 to avoid trial. In 1623, barely more than half a century after the introduction of the system, the Statute of Monopolies was passed, and monopolies have been illegal ever since, except in the milder forms of letters patent for inventors and special Acts of Parliament to empower public utility companies to function in the running of railways, canals, and the supply of gas and electricity.

In view of this, it might be questioned whether the Quota Act has any basis in common law at all. For please consider: whenever Parliament passes an Act empowering a company to make and distribute, say, electricity, it grants that privilege to a specifically named body of responsible, trusted men, who, in exchange for their privileges, assume certain definite obligations to the public, and the company is at all times directly responsible to Parliament. Again, in the case of the inventor, the law says in effect: "You have exercised patience, skill and ingenuity in your invention, so, as a reward, and for the sake of encouraging inventors generally (which is in the public interest), the Government grant a monopoly under letters patent to you personally or to your assigns, and for a limited period of sixteen years." After sixteen years the monopoly ceases, the patent lapses, and the invention is free to all. Now that seems fair and equitable. There is a give-and-take about such an arrangement which has its roots in ancient precedent, common law and common sense.

Not so in the case of the Quota Act. Under the law, anybody can make films. He only needs to have, or to hire, a certain necessary amount of money, British studio facilities and British personnel, and he can go ahead, assured of one-fifth of the screening time of the country's cinemas as his guaranteed market, guaranteed by the

Government. The privileges under the Quota Act are for anyone who can take advantage of them, but no responsibilities to Parliament or to the public need to be undertaken by the film maker. Parliament gives all, but gets nothing.

And the nation, this nation that has given so much to the world, where does it come in under the Quota arrangement? Why, of course, we enjoy the exclusive privilege of having films rammed down our throats that can only be sold in a Government protected market, films of a quality and cultural standard that hardly any other country is prepared to touch. (Yes, we know all about the Technicolor "Henry V" and "Cæsar and Cleopatra." We shall have something pertinent to say about these films in due course.)

There is an even more serious aspect to this question than most people realise. The trading privileges that Crown and Parliament have distributed in the last four hundred years were concerned with tangible goods, tangible merchandise, tangible transport facilities, or lighting and power. The inventor's privilege is limited to a fixed term of years. But under the Quota Act you are dealing with intangible things of the highest importance—ideas. Fictional films are not merely so many feet of exposed film stock. Films teach even when they are only meant to entertain. They carry certain attitudes of mind, a certain outlook, a definite approach to life.

Therefore the Quota Act is not merely an open licence to trade in a Government guaranteed one-fifth of the British home market; it assures that any kind of message, any kind of mental anarchy, may be propagated and disseminated freely within that market.

This licence is not terminable, as is the case with inventors. Our film makers and financiers regard the Quota Act as fixed and eternal. Indeed, some of them would like to see the Act extended. They would like to see British compulsory quota increased from one-fifth to one-half, if possible. They would like to see a heavy import duty on American films, in addition. In further addition they would like to be exempted from Income Tax and Excess Profits Tax, while the Americans trading here should be taxed to the hilt.

Yes, that's how it works. That is the natural and inevitable path which every monopoly abuse has followed since Elizabeth. Monopoly and grab are practically synonymous. From little to more to much more. Appetite increases with what it feeds on, and appetite in monopoly is limitless until it is checked by public action.

And even if the demands of British film makers were acceded to, what guarantee have the public that British films would ever reach the high entertainment standards it has a right to expect? Our film makers have had twenty years of protection and how much nearer to world standard product have they arrived? In twenty years they might, had they thought of the nation a little more, and of themselves a little less, have built a genuine large-scale industry, turning out films worthy to be seen at home, and sold to the world on a par with the American product, for the good of the industry

and our national good' name, stuff that the world public would clamour to see.

Instead, what? There is a tremendous outcry in the cinéma world against the tendency to trustification in British film making, film distribution and cinema ownership. It is based on the well-founded fear that all three branches of the industry may come under a single control under the chairmanship of Mr. J. Arthur Rank, the milling millionaire, who already controls the six hundred theatres in the Odeon and Gaumont-British circuits, about half the film making studio space in the country, the distributing firms of General Film Distributors and Eagle-Lion, the Universal News reel, and the control in Britain of the Universal films of America. Thus, what is called "vertical integration" in the industry, already exists.

But all those who are complaining and agitating and sitting on committees and sending out reports on this burning question seem to be curiously oblivious of certain other important aspects of the problem to which we have drawn attention, and of which the public interest in quality product is the most important of all. They concern themselves with the financial, physical and organisational set-up, and rightly so, but the following points do not appear to have been taken much notice of, namely, that:

- (a) The trustification monopoly tendency in the film industry is already implicit in the indiscriminate, indeterminate Government grant of film-making monopoly under the Quota Act.
- (b) While cinemas and studios can be acquired, but only for millions of pounds in hard cash, the greatest asset of all, the privileges under the Quota Act, are acquired and enjoyed by film makers without payment of a penny.
- (c) Any form of Government granted monopoly inevitably leads to another and larger monopoly. The thing just snowballs on.
- (d) The Quota Act, as the central pivot, not only encourages the tendency towards large-scale trustification, but it helps to form a number of satellite, petty monopolies that gravitate towards and revolve round the great central trust, very much like the planets round the sun.

We have shown that, historically, monopoly, whether granted by Parliament or Crown to private persons, or monopolies by private individuals, tend inevitably towards abuse. (The Post Office and public utility companies are not monopolies in this derogatory sense, because these are closely and directly responsible to Parliament and people.) Wherever a free Parliamentary trading grant, like the Quota Act, is left to work itself out unchecked, the people who benefit by this grant will, and do, try to make all the money they can with very little regard for the public weal. The big monopolist, however, cannot run his business alone. He has to seek out lesser satellite monopolists. The general frame of mind of selfishness and unintelligent self interest reaches out to a large periphery of all kinds of large and small business men who are

either closely or remotely connected with the big central trust.

Big fleas have little fleas upon their backs to bite 'em;
And little fleas have lesser fleas, and so *ad infinitum*.

It is this general widespread frame of mind, spreading as far out as our film critics and cultural leaders, which is one of the great problems of this country. The effect of day-to-day film criticism upon British film production, and film production upon film criticism, is reciprocal and continuous. If a film critic chooses to say just what he likes, to please himself and in a spirit of petty anarchy, then the petty and the large monopolist does not feel out of place in doing what he likes with his own, or what he thinks is his own. Nobody feels uncomfortable when everybody does what he likes, irrespective of the public interest: when the whole atmosphere is conducive to that form of behaviour.

Just how little this problem has been taken notice of can be seen from a summary of the report on the film monopoly problem submitted to the President of the Board of Trade, which was published in *The Times*, in August, 1944. This is how it reads on the relevant points:

A CURB ON FILM MONOPOLY

COUNCIL'S PROPOSALS

Control of Combine's Expansion

Proposals designed to check the development of monopoly in the film industry are contained in a report submitted to the President of the Board of Trade by the Cinematograph Films Council. The report is the work of an independent committee consisting of Mr. Albert Palache (chairman), Sir Walter Citrine and Professor Arnold Plant. Its broad conclusions have been unanimously accepted by the Council, though "without necessarily endorsing each and every detailed recommendation on which certain members of the Council desire to reserve judgment."

The members of the committee find that there has been in recent years a definite tendency towards monopoly in the industry. It has manifested itself in (a) the rapid growth of the vertically integrated combines and of the control which they are able to exercise at various stages, and (b) the introduction and extension of undesirable practices in restraint of trade, partly by distributors, partly by producers, partly by exhibitors. They declare that the continuance of independent production is of the first importance and should be the over-riding consideration in formulating measures to counteract these influences. . . .

. . . There should be established under Government sponsorship a film finance corporation for financing qualified producers on reasonable terms. It is also suggested that

members of the board of this corporation might be appointed as a tribunal to arbitrate on specified issues within the industry. The film finance corporation should be empowered to establish a renting organisation, eventually extending its activities into the field of oversea marketing as well as of home distribution. Legislation should prohibit conditional bookings and make every picture available to exhibitors free from all ties or obligations to take any other pictures from the same distributor or producer. Distributors should be compelled by law to treat with co-operative booking organisations of independent exhibitors on the same terms as they would accord to a similar circuit of owned cinemas.

Legislation should also be introduced to permit further substantial increases in the renters' and exhibitors' quota of British films as soon as production facilities permit.

The Board of Trade should endeavour to secure for independent exhibitors, by agreement with the integrated producers and distributors, a reasonable share of the feature pictures which they handle. A similar attempt should be made to secure a reasonable proportion of screen time in the circuits, for independent producers.

The booking of a feature film to a circuit for the London release area should be divorced by law from all obligations to book the picture to the same circuit in other regions of the country. The circuits should be invited to experiment voluntarily with separate bookings for each of the exhibition regions. To prevent the building up of additional circuits, the Board of Trade should introduce legislation instituting a strict control over changes in ownership of cinemas. *To further the export of films, a strong British distributing organisation should be set up in the United States, and ultimately in the Dominions and oversea markets, offering its facilities to British producers on equal terms.*

Note the recommendations, especially those we have italicised. Note that the producer, distributor and the exhibitor is consulted—*never the consumer*. Note that an extension of Quota is recommended without a demand that an attempt should be made by the beneficiaries of Quota to raise the level of quality to somewhere near American (or, rather, world quality) standards. Note the recommendation to establish a distributing organisation abroad without reference to the quality of the films to be put in the counter-balance against the American.

Typical of the widespread oblivion of the existence of the customer was the B.B.C. broadcast given on January 26th, 1945. It was a discussion on the future of films, and the participants were Michael Powell, producer, Dilys Powell, film critic, and Mr. Speakman, an independent exhibitor—but the customer was nowhere to be found. Those who dish it out had the field all to themselves,

The World Is My Cinema

while the rest of us, as always, were expected to take it. Needless to say, Mr. Speakman, whose profession keeps him in closer touch with the general public than is the case with Michael and Dilys, was the only one who had anything to say worth listening to.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MONOPOLY MIND, the Monopoly outlook or philosophy of life which is encouraged and fed by a fenced in, exclusive market, is the same in a film financier, film producer, film director, or film critic. There is one point upon which all these people working in their several spheres in Britain agree, whatever minor differences they may have among themselves. There is common agreement in their mental attitudes towards the public. The wide, general public simply do not exist in their minds except as vague, dim shadows. To the British film financier, at one end, the public is a kind of distant, general source of revenue. At the extreme other end, among a certain group of film critics, the customers are a kind of inchoate rabble, to be treated with disdain, and greeted from aloft with a sneer.

These attitudes of mind are general in those countries in which film making is a protected industry. That means almost every country in the world except America. That includes Britain. On the other hand, the dominant attitude in America among all classes has been respect for the film, and for the film's customers—the public.

Wherever this is protection, there is Monopoly. Wherever there is Monopoly, there is a strong tendency to disregard the public interest; there is no incentive to engage in market research. Wherever there is disregard for the public interest there is a corresponding elevation of the "I am it. I know what's good for you!" merchants. This point can be illustrated even from that very broadcast we referred to in the previous chapter. Mr. Speakman, the practical man of affairs, who has to cater for real men and women in the real world, and not for a small crowd of sleep-walkers, tells Dilys Powell, film critic of the *Sunday Times*, quite frankly that he does not see what useful purpose film critics serve. The purpose, however, is clear enough, though it is, at present, not particularly useful. The purpose is, as Dilys herself cleverly explained, though not in these very words, to persuade the public to conform to Dilys, and not Dilys to the public. That general and widespread monopoly mind which persuades itself that it can do what it likes with its own, conditions Dilys Powell to take

advantage of the strongly entrenched and unassailable ramparts of her own particular column in the *Sunday Times* to pronounce on the people's film with pen and prejudice. The style, outlook and content of her criticisms belong rightfully to the appraisal of every form of cultural expression except film.

That is why, as Mr. Speakman points out, what Miss Powell and fellow critics in the Press say, or do not say, does not affect the public response at all, certainly not in the immediate sense in which Mr. Speakman understands it. But in the long term sense the cumulative result of years of arbitrary opinionating has had a catastrophic effect upon British film production, and has prevented British films from gaining entry into the world market. Take a look at any British film you like, at random, highbrow or lowbrow, in the cheap "quickie" class, or in the half-a-million or million pound class, monochrome or Technicolor, long or short, or from any British studio you like to mention, and you will find an absolute, pathetic, almost pathological leaning upon words, words, words; upon the verbal imagery of Shakespeare in "*Henry V*," upon Shavian fireworks in "*Cæsar and Cleopatra*," upon interminable talk in the Noel Coward masterpieces, and even more concentrated talk in such cheap pieces as "*Kiss the Bride Good-bye*." British films, with the encouragement of British critical opinion, have become little more than photographed printed pages, talking tracts (see especially the J. B. Priestley film output). They are not films, not moving pictorialisations of life, showing life better than it is. British films are not world films, because they show life as it ought not to be.

As a consequence, Mr. Speakman himself has rather less to worry about than the rest of us, for he still has four-fifths of his available screening time in which to sell American films to his public, and American films are the main source of his revenue—which is lucky for Mr. Speakman and his fellow exhibitors, but not so good for British prestige abroad. And if American films have lately shown a tendency to deteriorate morally, that does not excuse our own product.

This, therefore, is the position. America remains the only country where the genuine article has been made, despite recent lapses. The film made in Britain is not a film at all. The film of France, Germany and Russia which the elevated critics have been in the habit of praising, is not a film. An aeroplane is not an aeroplane if through some defect it has no "lift," if it remains grounded. A film is not a film unless it communicates with that "lift" which truly belongs to its own non-verbal, non-alphabetical nature, the "lift" that enables it to fly across all boundaries of class, caste, language and national frontiers. A film is not a film if (as in the protected film-producing countries) it is a communication imposed arbitrarily from above: by the few upon the many. It is not a film if it only communicates from a few to a few. It is not a film if, instead of

transcending all frontiers, it remains grounded and restricted within its own national borders; or, if at best, it makes an appeal only to the intellectuals of other countries. Such a film is false to its own essential nature. The film that denies the fundamental truth that all men are one in their primary emotional needs all over the world, is not a film, any more than a donkey can be put in the same class as a thoroughbred racehorse because both are quadrupeds.

A film is only true to its natural function, when, in free and open world-wide competition, it, makes the greatest appeal to the greatest number of millions of people who exercise their own unimposed, undictated freedom of choice at the democratic polling booth of the box office. The whole history of the fifty years of American film development shows clearly and vividly that at no single stage, from the earliest peep-show Mutoscopes, to the one-reelers and scenics, to the beginnings of the star system and the multiple-reelers, and from the silent film to the talkie, were the so-called "Moguls" ever able to impose *their* will upon the American people. At every possible stage it was the will of the people expressed through the pay-box which dominated the actions of the "Moguls."

Well, now, if the American film is the culminating result of half a century of democratic pressure from below, from the patrons upon the film makers, and if America fought against Nazidom and for a better world, in which country, then, would you expect to find the most exact, the most extreme antithesis to the American film? In which country would you expect to find the exact opposite movement in film development—the film makers imposing their will upon the public, instead of the public influencing the film makers? Which was the country that, following the exact opposite line of America, adopted as its film philosophy the sadistic view of the world, that only evil men can flourish in this alleged evil world and that good men go down? Which was the country that has consistently shown in its film output that virtue does not pay? Which was the country that eventually adopted this philosophy in practice and then dragged the whole world down in ruin and destruction? It is not very difficult to guess.

Yes, it is precisely Germany to whom we are instructed by our brilliant film opinionaters to look to for film inspiration: Germany and France, mainly Germany. For over twenty-five years this cult of German and French film worship has been the mainstay and prop of pseudo-intellectual propaganda. For over twenty-five years our leading film critics have adjured, exhorted and pleaded with us to look to Germany and to turn our backs on America. For twenty years out of those twenty-five our leading film makers, with the protection of a Government reserved and preserved home market, have been largely under the influence of that propaganda and advice. Are we anywhere nearer world market status than we were twenty years ago? The answer is that we are further away from it than we have ever been before, despite mass increase of production.

Quantity has grown, but quality—especially moral quality—has diminished.

To illustrate how fixed and rigid was this sleep-walking cult of Continental film worship which has brought British films to their present pass, we cannot do better than to quote from an article by film critic C. A. Lejeune, in *The Observer* of October the 6th, 1940.

Remember October, 1940? Remember the Germans, in their arrogance and bestiality, drowning Europe in a sea of blood and chaos? Remember the indiscriminate bombing of Warsaw and Rotterdam? Remember the humiliation of France, brought to her knees and held down with the assistance of French Quisling traitors? Remember Dunkirk? Remember the Battle of Britain? Remember how this nation stood poised in hourly expectation of invasion by the Germans?

Who, then, but a critic, oblivious of nearly everything that was going on in the outer world, and reacting only to subconscious reflex stimuli, could have written that *Observer* article in October, 1940? Just listen to it. Peeping into the future and endeavouring to forecast what sort of films we will be making or ought to be making when the war ends, she says:

“It is not too far-fetched to assert that the last war was responsible for the great French cinema that the present war destroyed . . . All we can say with any certainty is that the best films have always come from pinched nations shut down on their own resources.”

It is difficult to know what “best” means in this context. Best for whom, or for what? But to proceed:

“All that we can do is to adduce a certain parallel from the last war. The nations that suffered most by the war, Germany and France, began, within a couple of years, to build up the finest cinema they had ever known. *Out of material poverty came richness of ideas. Out of devastation came Renaissance.* The early and middle 1920's saw the Golden Age of the German cinema. Cut off from the outside world, with little money to spend, the Germans fell back on their rich store of invention and legend. Artists of every sort worked together in the interests of entertainment, film men, men of the theatre, writers, painters, musicians, even sculptors and architects: *Imagination was strong and vivid in Germany in those days.*

“There was a story everywhere, in history, *in dreams*, in the beloved waltz tunes of their fathers, in youth, in legend, even in the border land of magic. Those were the days of ‘Caligari,’ ‘Waxworks,’ ‘The Nibelungs,’ ‘The Last Laugh,’ ‘Destiny,’ ‘The Waltz Dream,’ and dozens more, each film a full and exciting adventure. No one who saw those pictures has ever forgotten them. In France *the new order* came more slowly, and sprang mostly from amateurs and experi-

mentalists, the young men like Delluc, Gance and Clair, who were independent from—but sharply influenced by—American technique at its best. Their business was to cut loose the French cinema from its Comédie Française tradition, to show the part that the camera could play in the creation of a mood or the pointing of a laugh."

That was printed and published in a leading Conservative Sunday newspaper in October, 1940. When Britain stood alone as a beacon-light of hope to the world; when the people of Britain relied and believed in themselves alone, come what may; when the "few" had proved their mettle and their quality; at this very time Lejeune tells us *not* to rely upon ourselves, but upon the Germans and the French, for our future in films. Churchill's call to "fight on the beaches—we shall never surrender"—finds not the slightest echo in Lejeune's consciousness. On the contrary, her conscious, or unconscious mind adopts the current propaganda phrase of the Nazis: "the new order." Instead of advising us to turn our gaze to the future in the use of the film medium which is continually and freshly evolving from hour to hour, Lejeune tells us to look to the miserable past of the chaotic 1920's. Instead of "No surrender," Lejeune says, in effect: "Surrender your minds and your souls to the Germans and the French."

Hark to a couple of sample phrases: "Out of devastation came Renaissance," the logical moral of which is that the more we have of devastation, the merrier we shall be. Again: "Imagination was strong and vivid in Germany in those days." Yes, very strong and very vivid. Those were the days of secret and indiscriminate murder of public figures like Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Rathenau and Erzberger, of Junker intrigues, of the Nazi beer hall *putsch*, and of the rise of Hitler to power. The first on the list of Lejeune's praiseworthy German films is "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari." Made in 1919, it was a film of cruelty, murder and madness, a veritable monument to the Marquis De Sade and a veritable pointer to the next twenty years of German life and German films, which, however they may have differed from one another, were consistent to the point of monotony in their cruelty, murder and madness. The group who made "Caligari," consisting of Robert Wiene, Carl Mayer, Conrad Veidt, Emil Jannings and Werner Krauss, among others, called themselves "Der Sturm"—The Storm. Is it just a fortuitous accident, a mere coincidence, that the world has since been plagued with the Nazi Sturm-Abteilung (S.A.), formations linked to the Gestapo? Was the Volksturm an accident?

The third on Lejeune's list of commendable German films is "The Nibelungs," a picturisation of the ancient, barbaric, Teutonic Nibelung Saga which helped to stir up and re-vivify among the Germans the memory traces of their own barbaric, pagan past, the Teutonic past which has been little affected by the comparatively recent imprint of Christianity. The same Fritz Lang who directed "The

"Nibelungs" made a series of films in which the central character is Dr. Mabuse. (The Germans are fond of Doktors: Dr. Caligari, Dr. Mabuse, Dr. Goebells, etc.) This Doktor Mabuse is a murderer, madman and schizophrenic, and in the last of the series, made in 1933, "The Last Testament of Dr. Mabuse," before Fritz Lang fled to Hollywood, the Doktor finishes up with a crazy burning and smashing and wild destruction. In "M," also directed by Fritz Lang just before Hitler came in as Chancellor, Peter Lorre plays the part of the child murderer of Duesseldorf, a gravely pathological character. At the end, the rag, tag and bobtail, the pimps, fences, thieves, beggars and cut-throats of the city, take over the functions of the municipality and do what the incapable police are unable to do—they capture and try the child murderer in a special thieves' court of their own, held in a derelict factory.

Is this a coincidence? Is it an accident that this film is almost an exact pre-photograph of the Nazi regime which was about to take over from an alleged incompetent Government? No, indeed. Instead of running away, Fritz Lang should have stayed in Germany to receive the Iron Cross with swords and carrot leaves at the hands of Hitler, whom Fritz Lang had so faithfully, though unwittingly and unintentionally, served.

Is it a coincidence or an accident that Fritz Lang, refugee from Nazidom, continues the good work of propagating murder, cruelty and madness from Hollywood? Is it strange that the German obsession with lust, cruelty, murder and madness traces out consistently throughout the years, whether under Frederick, Bismark, Wilhelm or Hitler, whether in a refugee or Nazi? Here are some of the titles of Fritz Lang's Hollywood productions: "Fury," "Hangmen Also Die," "Man-Hunt," "The Woman in the Window." In every one the lust for killing is given visual expression.

These are the murder-loving offspring of Lejeune's "Golden Age of the German Cinema." Verily, this generation has had a price to pay for the pleasures indulged in by its predecessors in the 1920's. In one respect, Lejeune is right: "No one who saw those pictures has ever forgotten them." And the many suffering millions who never saw those pictures at all will have cause to remember the effect of them for generations to come.

Lejeune and the critics who follow Lejeune, our film makers, our cultural leaders, our Church and political leaders, should, if they wish to preserve humanity, have Darwin's words engraved upon their souls:

"Whatever makes any bad action familiar to the mind
renders its performance by so much the easier."

CHAPTER FIVE

AT THIS POINT it may be well to pause for a moment to answer possible objections. It will be claimed that the love for "the Golden Age of the German Cinema" is kindled by the "art" aspects, and not by the subconscious murder impulses which these German films so vividly portray and impress upon the mind. It will be claimed that our own "Golden Agers" do not go about murdering people as a regular habit after seeing "Golden Age" films. The objectors will point with derision at the Bela Lugosi and other horror films of America and will ask: "Why have those films not affected America the way you say?" They will argue that even in a progressive age like Elizabeth's, Shakespeare put in some very derogatory scenes in his "Julius Cæsar," among other plays.

These objectors claim for themselves the qualities of refinement and good taste, while they pillory the masses as mindless, "unsympathetic and insensitive." Dr. Goebbels was an old hand at the same game. He always accused his enemies of the crimes the Nazis themselves committed. But the habit of despising the tastes of the people and of elevating the somewhat twisted and distorted views of their own insular clique is all prevailing.

And as far as the professional film critics in this country are concerned, the general attitude of superiority is by no means confined to the political Right wing. Conservative, Liberal, Labour, Communist, Common Wealth, the uniformity among film critics is truly astonishing. From the Conservative *Daily Mail* to the Communist *Daily Worker*, from the weekly *Spectator* to the weekly *Tribune* not long ago under the editorship of Parliament's one-time stormy petrel, Aneurin Bevan, now Minister of Health, they all sing the same refrain. The call seems to have gone forth: "Film critics of all parties, unite! You have nothing to lose but your rational common-sense. Heaven knows what you have to gain."

For example, here are the opening lines by Winifred Horrabin, from a random issue of the *Tribune*, February 9th, 1945:

"If Daphne Du Maurier is not careful she will become the Marie Corelli of the Brave New World, with her successes on

the screen, by her novels, and now, in the theatre. It would be a pity if the grand-daughter of a fine and sensitive artist, and the daughter of a brilliant, sympathetic actor, became a cheer-leader for all that is unsympathetic and insensitive in the world after the war. "Frenchman's Creek" is technicoloured nonsense about a dazzling pure beauty who married a bore . . ."

Now we hold no particular brief for Daphne Du Maurier, and it would be beside the point to argue with Miss Horrabin as to whether Miss Du Maurier is, or is not, a torch-bearer for the Brave New World. The point to notice is that the very thought of being a popular writer for the masses, a "cheer-leader" in Miss Horrabin's phrase, is enough to give her the creeps. On every other page of the *Tribune* the bias is, or is supposed to be, for the masses, *for* the Brave New World, and *against* the privileged few. But when it comes to films the mood is *against* the masses, *against* the Brave New World and *for* the privileged few—in this case the "artist" class. The Fuehrer-like "artist" is elevated. The mass of the people despised. Clearly there is not a pin to chose between Horrabin of the Left and Lejeune of the Right.

What merit is there in the contention of most film critics that "art" and what you do in real life have no connection? Do the films of Germany and the Bela Lugosi films of America bear any resemblance? What is the difference? The difference is that while the horror films of America were, until recently, only a tiny proportion of the total American film output, the horror films of the German "Golden Age" formed the bulk, the majority output of the German film industry for German home consumption. Even German "comedies" or waltz tune films were tinged with the same negative outlook. The dominant mood in all German films, whether made during Weimar or under the Nazis, was either of cynicism or of a desperate disbelief in the goodness or happiness of men. The "Golden Agers" are quite incapable of grasping that when you are living in a comparatively healthy social mental environment in England or America, an occasional sight of a German or French film may be something of a rare tit-bit to gush about. Those films were made to be sold by men of business in their own home markets in the first instance, and not primarily for the delectation of a few intelligentsia abroad. Those German and French business men would have preferred to emulate the American business men and to have made films for the world market. But they simply did not know how, just as the British film makers today do not know how.

A nip of alcohol imbibed occasionally may do very little harm. But imagine the state of a people who soak themselves in it? In other words, try to imagine the condition of a people who have nothing else but "Golden Age" films as their staple mental diet and you will gain some insight into the mental state of the German people before and since Hitler.

Another point worth noticing is, that while the horror films of Germany appealed to a small section of the extreme top layer in this country and in America, and had no following at all among the masses, the horror films of America were, until a year or two ago, usually treated as a joke by a small section of the people at the other end of the social scale in England or America. These films belonged as a rule to the quickie class of film which appeal to persons living at a very low cultural and emotional level. But, high or low, intellectual or plebian, German or American, delighting in watching a film of horror is hardly the mark of a person claiming to belong to a high level of civilisation. The first, certain, signs of a society in decay and dissolution is in the morbid interest in *watching* the suffering of other human beings. It starts as the perverted interest of a few, and then spreads as a regular pastime of the many. Thus fell Rome, when Gladiatorial contests to the death, and the devouring of the Christians by lions, and worse, became the entertainment of a large section of the Roman population. Thus fell Germany, when glass windows were fitted to the murder gas chambers at Lublin, so that Germans might watch human beings writhing in their death agony. Everything grows from less to more, providing the soil is suitably nurtured and stimulated. In "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari," the senseless, meaningless, motiveless, cold, mechanical murder is enacted in make-believe. But it is not very long, under suitable conditions, before make-believe is transformed to the real world, and is enacted in reality. The fate of Germany could be the fate also of Britain, if the cult of murder in British and American films is not checked in time.

What about Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar" and "Macbeth"? you might ask. There are several answers: one of them is that Shakespeare wrote for a platform-stage where, when a person "dies," he raises himself from the floor at the end of the performance and bows to the onlookers, thus, to some extent, breaking the illusion of what went before. There is nothing like that in "Caligari." Another point is that in every one of Shakespeare's plays the negative and positive aspects of human life are nearly equally balanced. Man's inhumanity to man is shown against a background of human sympathy, human understanding and human pity. The evil is usually balanced with good. There is nothing remotely like that in "Caligari" or in any of "Caligari's" successors throughout the years.

Now let us see what there is in this "art" idea, which is the main *raison d'être* for the intelligentsia myopia on the film. Once upon a time, and not so long ago, the word "art" meant any kind of *doing* whatsoever. There was the art of the ploughman, the art of the soldier, the writer's art and the blacksmith's art, the carpenter's and the builder's art. The word "artisan" survives as a true indication of what the word "art" really meant. Today, it has become narrowly restricted to paintings and sometimes to literature.

"Art" has been endowed by common intellectual usage with some kind of abstruse, ephemeral quality. Hence "art" is away and above and beyond any sort of relation to commercial processes, and the commercial film is fore-doomed to be looked down upon. It has become an *idee fixe* in the minds of the coteries that a film can rarely be a work of "art" if it appeals to the many and makes money—especially if it makes money. It is only allowed within the sacred category if a film is abstruse, restricted in appeal to a few, subjective in outlook, loses money and delivers a message with a negative social content. A film to count as "art" must be written, produced, directed and even sometimes acted as well by one dominating personality, just as if it were a canvas upon an easel, dominated and controlled by the single, individual painter, who will brook no helping hand from anyone.

There was that filmic work of "art" produced, etc., etc., by Orson Welles, "The Magnificent Ambersons," for instance, which ends with Welles' vocal signature booming from the screen at the end: "And Orson Welles produced it"—thus reproducing the painter's conventional method of putting his signature at the bottom right-hand corner of his painting.

The attitude of mind which elevates "art" above everyday life, tends to elevate the "artist" above the ordinary usages of everyday life. The artist has the God-given "right to express himself," to use the fashionable phrase. He has rights, but no duties. That is why, when strongly individualist artist-producer types like Orson Welles or Preston Sturges assume the chief control in the making of a film, they give themselves a free hand in the disruption and destruction of the family and social ties. Orson Welles in the part he plays as Citizen Kane, in his film of that name, is the very epitome of an unrestrained ego that seeks power and dominion over others amid fantastic wealth in a huge fantastic castle. Welles acquires, in the course of this picture, the physiognomy of Mussolini, and he so orders his life, that at the end, he starts crashing and smashing all the vast treasures he has taken a lifetime to accumulate. There is an extremely close affinity between the Citizen Kane type and the phoney politician who works up to be the head of a State and then contrives at the end to smash up that State. Both these types exercise "rights," unrestrained by any obligation to the public—rights without duties.

The critics and the aesthetes simply raved about "Citizen Kane." Mr. Speakman, during the broadcast we have mentioned, had cause to remember "Citizen Kane" as one of his big flops. The people know the anti-people types like Citizen Kane and they tell him to

*It should be noted that the dominant method of film making in America is quite opposite to the methods used by Orson Welles, Preston Sturges of U.S., Rene Clair of France, and Fritz Lang of Germany, who are about the only four film makers in Hollywood who have assumed the dictator-individualist-artist-director-producer-writer and head cook role, a role which is the exception, not the rule.

go to the devil. They know. They have had some. They know in their bones and say so at the pay-box that what Orson Welles does in miniature in "Citizen Kane" and in make-believe, his political counterparts in Germany and in Italy have already done in magnitude and in earnest. It took fifteen years from 1919 with "Caligari" to the accession of Hitler in 1933. Not fifteen, but ten years, would be enough to establish Fascism in America if the Orson Welles method and outlook were to dominate American production. It is all a question of which method is the dominant. It is a matter of weight, balance and momentum. Fortunately, the atmosphere in America is dead against the exclusive Fuehrer-artist principle in film making.

What the mass of ordinary people realise, but the aesthetes do not, is that art is absolutely integral with the production of things that are useful and necessary in the carrying on of everyday communal life. This has always been so from the beginning of society, thousands of years ago. Periods of the greatest cultural expansion have been periods of commercial prosperity at the same time. It is only when decay sets in, that art begins to become separated from social use value. Then the artist's "liberty to express himself" tends to become a licence to do as he pleases, without any regard to the social effect of his work upon his fellows. He becomes a law unto himself, an elevated god with "rights," but no obligations to balance those rights. There sets in, as in the 1920's, a period of cubism and dadaism and a crowd of other phoney isms, and the phoney atmosphere thus generated assists the rise of phoney politicians to State power who use that power to destroy themselves and bring misery to their peoples.

Let us see if we can bring this basic question of "art" yet closer to earth. Art is not by any means an exclusive possession of man. The first fundamentals, the main bricks with which art concepts are built, are what we have inherited from the animal kingdom. Form, colour, poise, rhythm, song, are all characteristic of birds and animals, and even a very human-like round dance is performed by certain animals during courtship as a means of attracting the opposite sex.

Now this is a point to remember, especially when we consider what films are for and how they should be made. These pleasing manifestations among birds and animals are *purposive*. The song of a bird is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. It has to be a pleasant means, or the purposeful end could not be achieved. And the end is the survival of the species through sexual selection. A song of a bird is comparatively simple. A film, however, is highly complex. But simple or complex, in birds or in men, the aim is survival—survival of the individual, survival of the species, and in men the survival of the family and society; for without society an individual man cannot live at all. That explains why sex is so much an ingredient in fictional films. Sex in itself is not objection-

able on the screen. It is only when the animal aspects of sex are given greater emphasis than the human or social implications of sex, that a film shows decay. For it is clear that animal sex among humans, given in a *social* medium like the film, is a reversion, a throw-back to earlier forms of existence.

To repeat. The song of a bird, or the proud display of the magnificently coloured male peacock's feathers to the female, the call of animals, or even the touch of antennæ between insects, all serve as communications, and every communication has something definite, purposeful and useful to communicate. The simpler elements of art employed by the animal and bird kingdom are united into greater complexity by man as man develops greater complexity in his social living. But the fundamental, the key, the thread, remains the same—survival, purpose, use value, social use value.

Every human art form therefore is, or should be, a communication, a real communication, something that means the same or nearly the same to the sender as to the recipient, the painter and the reviewer, the film maker and the cinema patron. We have, as citizens, as much right to demand a healthy and socially satisfying film from our film makers as we have a right to demand unadulterated food from the grocer, a properly built house from the builder, proper and safe facilities for travel on our railways and roads, and proper educational opportunities. It is within these bounds of social usefulness that the artist is entitled to enjoy the "right to express himself."

History offers many lessons to show that the moment people forget what an art form or form of communication is for, social extinction is near. We may take ancient Egypt as an example. When we consider the several thousand years over which Egyptian civilisation stretches, we can understand that forms of communication had to be invented to hold that civilisation together for so long. But when we look at those remains of the fantastically impossible gods with heads of hawks and bulls, when we see the conventional stiffness and rigidity of the human figures and the fixity and conformity of gesture portrayed, we begin to realise that at the end, Egypt was ripe for dissolution. For, all the signs show, that what started centuries earlier as forms of communication for uniting society, had fallen into utter chaos. Egypt was ready to collapse at the collapse of that which holds any society together—a common form of communication, a common rational understanding and one all-embracing unifying religion. When you get to a point of having millions of different gods, when communication turns to its opposite and becomes confusion, when religion turns to its opposite and instead of binding people to each other it atomises them into separate, single units, the disappearance of that civilisation is certain. So complete was the Egyptian eclipse, that for two thousand years there was not a soul on earth who could understand the Egyptian inscriptions. It was only after the discovery, by accident, of the Rosetta stone,

that modern scholars were able to decipher the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs.

Italy affords us another historical instance to show us how art may decay from its original purpose and serve opposite ends to those of art. From unifying people, it atomises them. Starting as a means of holding or binding a community together, art finishes by splitting the community into opposing internecine factions.

The earliest Italian primitive paintings were concerned with religion and religious teaching. They were instinct with a fervour which impresses the beholder to this very day. Those pictures, in their day, enhanced and deepened the emotions of the people. They helped and encouraged the instinct for the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God. The Madonna and Child, the Adoration of the Magi, the Flight into Egypt, and related subjects were the practical, visual reinforcements of the New Testament teachings.

The coming of the Renaissance and the 'New Learning', while it brought an advance in the knowledge of *material things* among the scholars and a delight in the *representation of things* among the sculptors and painters, inevitably brought with it a reversion; back to pagan pre-Christianity. The great enthusiasm which arose for the study of Greek and Roman classics brought with it both the good in ancient Roman law, and the viciously bad of that Imperial Rome which in its last decaying phase was swamped by Sadism, Neroism, pillage and destruction. The Italian painters, overjoyed at the license (and licentiousness) of the time, continued to paint their Madonnas, but no longer with the same deep fervour as hitherto. Sensuousness took the place of piety. *Religio*, the binding together, was forgotten. From now on the pleasure of the individual self came first, the collective good was second. In other words, the displacement of religion, the idea that man not God was supreme, meant every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost. The age of the poison cup and the dagger set in, the age of the Borgias and the Medicis, who under the professorship of Machiavelli put everything they knew into the art of the double-cross, and tyrannical rule.

Such are the social consequences in every age of so-called "advanced," "adult" and "forward" movements in art. The Italian Renaissance painters, however, unlike the obscurant and confused sculptors of Ancient Egypt, or the muddled propagators of futile lunacies in our own day, like the Picassos, Klees and Salvador Dalli, bequeathed to the world a technical mastery of their art which has been unsurpassed, but their main concern was with beautiful faces and bodies, with lines and colours in fine composition. The primitive Italian painters brought people forward from Paganism to Christianity. The Italian Humanists, despite their own notions of the nobility of their cause, went back from Christianity (true Christianity), to self-pleasure, self-interest in place of the collective interest. The soul had gone out of painting, as it

had gone out of religion and communal life. Only the physical husk remained, with Boccacio as the supreme advocate of self-love and license and Machiavelli as the high priest of politics.

A similar movement can be seen, telescoped into fifty years of film history. The film in America, during its first forty years, served its natural social purpose—it helped to weld together a polyglot population of many races and languages into one nation. The film in America has had a cohesive effect. Whether it was so intended by the film magnates is beside the point. Today there is a backward, negative tendency. In America it shows itself in a loosening of the Hays code and a descent into Sadism, and in Britain there is the same decline into Sadism, plus a denigration of the British name and of religious feeling, plus a mocking at marriage ties and family life. And while in Renaissance Italy there was a return to Paganism and the worship of *things*, we see in such films as "Henry V" and "Cæsar and Cleopatra" a reversion to medieval Italy. In both films the emphasis is on *things*, not on people; not with emotions, feelings, aspirations and human, kindly passions. In "Henry V" the Italian influence in background and costume is unmistakable, but the breath and soul and spirit of England ticks only faintly, only intermittently.

In "Cæsar and Cleopatra" the obsession with *things*, expensive things, paintings and costumes has reached the most absurd limit. And therefore naturally and inevitably such obsessions must, and do, displace feeling and kindly sympathy for *people*. The soulless character of this film has already been described by the authors in *Bernard Shaw Among the Innocents* (Sidneyan Society, 1s. 6d.). It is a complete reversion to Neroism of the worst kind, and in this film, too, the Italian influence in its decadence may be discerned in theme, costume, colouring and background.

Every form of human communication, print, speech and static picture in paint; of photograph and moving picture in monochrome or Technicolor in its highest form, has a cohesive effect, but the moving picture has had a tighter, more lasting, binding effect because of its infinitely more powerful emotional impact upon the minds of people.

But because of these very powerful qualities, the film is equally capable of the most disruptive and destructive effect. In Germany from 1919 onwards, the film, the "Golden Age" film so much admired by our foolish intelligentsia, was, already hopelessly steeped in disruption. It took a path directly opposite to the American film of those days. Instead of growing like a tree or a plant, from below, from among its roots in the people, the German film was imposed upon the German people from above, by the phoney intellectuals. Instead of following the American method of exploring and discovering and testing by trial and error among the cinema's patrons, the German film took the "art" ideas of an earlier epoch and stuck them ready made upon the film. That, no

doubt, is one of the reasons why some of our pseudo-intellectuals were so fascinated by that classic of Germany's year of defeat, 1919, "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari," the forerunner and standard example of future German production. Instead of pointing the way to happiness and showing us a world more desirable than it actually is, the world of "Caligari" is one of unhappiness and distortion. Instead of calling all men together in a common brotherhood, "Caligari" does the opposite with the notion of every man for himself. Instead of showing us evil dethroned and justice done, "Caligari" shows us evil triumphant, murder without motive and death without reason, as when the young man in the film is told, "You will die before midnight." Instead of love—a brooding hate. Instead of purpose—chaos. Instead of tender feeling—frozen callousness. Instead of thought preceding action, there is action without thought, action without a spark of human sentiment, action like that of an automatic clock, without the slightest motivation that could be described as human or humane.

Certain *émigré* Germans have apologised for "Caligari" by maintaining that it had only a limited following at the time it was made. The fact, however, is indisputable that, as the writers show in *The Film Answers Back*, the film set the stamp and seal on all German film production throughout the period of the Weimar Republic. That it also set the seal and form upon the German mass mind need hardly be argued. Who has not heard of the S.S. and the Gestapo and Himmler and the torture camps, and the incinerators for human bodies at such places as Maideneck? When a number of German prisoners were captured in the Ardennes sector in the winter of 1944, and were asked by an American officer as to whether they felt any contrition for the crimes committed in their name, they were quite dumbfounded. "Why," they said, "we only killed a few Poles, Russians and Jews." They just could not understand what all the fuss was about. Who can deny that the cult of "Caligari" had left its mark?

Gilbert Seldes, in his book, *An Hour with the Movies*, says that "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari" was shown in Paris for years on end. That fact, and the fact that the film met with hardly any response from the British and American people (except for the few "art for art's sakes" in both countries), has a deeper significance than a good many people realise.

CHAPTER SIX

IT IS ONE OF THE PECULIARITIES of what is known as "show business" that those engaged in it are convinced that the art of attracting the public *via* the box-office to their seats at the theatre or the cinema is a mystery, that it is impossible to reduce the problem to a science, that the ways of the public are fickle, inscrutable, unpredictable. So it has seemed to those who have been steeped in it for years, who therefore *should know* but who, alas, very often, are too close to the trees to see the wood. Supplying the public needs in food, clothing, newspapers and transport, for instance, can be arranged for. They can be produced and supplied with a fair degree of evenness, a consistent regularity and within reasonably predictable limits. Why, then, the irregularity and speculativeness in the field of entertainment?

Buckle, in his *Introduction* to his *History of Civilisation in England*, says this:

In regard to Nature . . . events, apparently the most irregular and capricious, have been explained, and have been shown to be in accordance with certain fixed and universal laws. This has been done because men of ability and, above all, men of patient, untiring thought, have studied natural events with the view of discovering their regularity: *and if human events were subjected to a similar treatment, we have every right to expect similar results . . .* Whoever is at all acquainted with what has been done during the last two centuries, must be aware that every generation demonstrates some events to be regular and predictable, which the previous generation had declared to be irregular and unpredictable: so that the marked tendency of advancing civilisation is to strengthen our belief in the universality of order, of method, of law. This being the case, it follows that if any facts, or class of facts, have not yet reduced to order, we, so far from pronouncing them irreducible, should rather be guided by our experience of the past, *and should admit the probability that what we now call inexplicable, will, at some future time, be explained.*

(The italics are ours.)

Now, if there is one characteristic that distinguishes our age from any that preceded it, it is that nothing is looked upon as impossible. Everything is possible. The apparent mystery of show business is not necessarily a mystery. In every other human social activity, hit-and-miss has been gradually diminished, and scientific method has been gradually and increasingly introduced.

Professional showmen, by the very nature of their livelihood, cannot be expected to have the time or the inclination, even if they were gifted in that direction, to collect *all* the relevant facts extending over great stretches of time and through wide population areas, in order to study, compare and analyse masses of data, and to form a calm, considered opinion from such an objective analysis.

The individual showman, whether theatre man or film maker, being concerned with the immediate task of getting a living in a highly competitive field, cannot be expected to do what the community has to do for itself, assist in encouraging an advanced science of social mental processes.

The position is rather like the food business as it used to be at the time of Charles Dickens. Then, long before the Food and Drugs Acts, the right of private enterprise (which in itself and within limits is not a bad thing) was permitted to run wild. The dust-in-the-tea and sand-in-the-sugar grocer was quite a common figure of public derision. Happily, the days when the grocer exercised the right "to express himself," are gone and forgotten. But we have forgotten those far off days because the Food and Drugs Acts have been in operation for a good many decades, and so we tend to accept our present relative freedom from adulterated foods for granted.

But now the battle has to be fought out all over again, on the question of the mental food with which the public is being supplied.

At an early stage in the development of an industry, private enterprise is a tremendous forward-propelling influence, but this influence cannot be allowed to degenerate into private wilfulness or private license, detrimental to the public welfare.

Small ideas, childishness, petulance, wilfulness, are usually associated with small units exercising power out of proportion to their size, thinking only of their own private interests, and not of their interests as part of the interests of society as a whole.

There are many avenues of approach to the problem of striking a balance between the interests of commerce and the interests of the community. In America, where film making is a business, and is the only film business in the world which has developed on commercial lines without Government subsidies or other forms of assistance, all the major film companies banded together to form the Hays Association, through which they agreed to abide by a strict code of self-discipline. The Hays office grew out of a natural, organic development in the American film business, and in American social life. We shall never be able to meet American competition unless we understand what the American film is when we see it on the

screen, what the American film making organisation is behind the screen, and why and how it came into existence.

The study of the American film and film industry is not only commercially profitable—it offers a vast field of research in the humane sciences. To start with, the American film and industry is the only one in the world in which can be traced something like a clearly defined thread of development on the phylogenetic principle. Phylogensis is the principle underlying all biological, mental and social development; it explains the telescoping of the racial development of millions of years into the few months it requires for the growth and maturity of the individual. Thus, the human child, from egg cell to birth, recapitulates in the course of nine months, the physical story of the human race which has taken hundreds of millions of years to unfold.

The American film, in its short history of fifty years, seems, curiously enough, to have followed in outline the cultural development of the human race itself extending over tens of thousands of years. Even at its veriest germ-cell inception, when it was first invented, the ciné-camera was also the projector. Later, the camera was used exclusively for camera work, and a separate projector was invented to show the finished film. Thus, although the cinema is a man-made invention, its birth resembles an organic process, for the earliest forms of organic life are asexual. It is only later, when organisms evolve more complex structures, that the asexual method of reproduction gives place to the bi-sexual. The two replace the one.

The evolution of the human race has proceeded in stages from the lone individual, seeking and foraging for himself, to the family, the tribe, the clan, the city-State and the nation. The first American commercial films were limited in length, and could only be seen by the lone individual, that is through the peep-show Mutoscope. Films could only be seen one person at a time at one machine. The Mutoscope had quite a long vogue, but it soon gave place to the *collective* method of viewing, when a projector threw the moving picture upon a sheet in a store, and a number of people coming in from the street could stand or sit on rough forms, in rough surroundings, and see it. The film had reached the tribal stage, both in presentation and in content, for the films were then of the simplest; simple scenics, simple forms of activity like boxing and wrestling, corresponding to the simple interests and perception of the audiences of those days. It was at this time that immigration into America from every European country was proceeding apace. Those masses of people flocking to the industrial centres, largely illiterate and not knowing each other's language, struggling to acquire a working knowledge of the American language—English—formed the first, greedy audiences for the first collective, industrially produced form of expression—the film.

Soon, in keeping with the tribal stage of the film's development, there appeared concurrently, the cult of the trick film, mainly

imported into America from the French film studios of Melies. In these films anything might happen, as in a dream. Men might walk on the ceiling or ascend to the moon, or a deliverer might appear from the skies. Miracles were the natural element of Melies' films, and since a rough-and-ready pioneer existence left plenty of room for a desire for miracles and wonders among the people, these films showing apparent trampling over physical laws and flouting of probabilities held audiences for nearly twenty years, between 1895 and 1914. There can be little doubt that this comparatively long period corresponds phylogenetically to the age-long race memory of miracles and strange legerdemain performed by the early medicine men in primitive times. Another interesting phenomenon at this period, which reached its peak about 1909, was the tremendous popularity of the chase films, of which there were literally thousands made and shown. The appetite for these films, in which the main feature was usually the chase of a thief by members of the public, was almost insatiable, and again it can be said with certainty that this vogue corresponds culturally to the period before men settled down in permanent agricultural communities: that is to say, when men lived by, and took joy in, the hunt for food and the chase of the quarry.

As life itself grew more organised in the great industrial cities of the U.S.A., as housing, street sanitation and public services began to approach the present high social and hygienic standards, when life for the many evolved to a higher complexity, the film assumed a higher complexity. And from the simple elements of scenics, the trick and the chase, there came the first great break towards wider organisation in the film with the first real story film, "The Great Train Robbery."

If we compare the films before "The Great Train Robbery," phylogenetically, to the long period before civilisation commenced, when men lived in primitive communism, hunting and fishing, then this film would correspond to the break into class-divided society, between the bad men who robbed, and the community who were the robbed. From the moment "The Great Train Robbery" appeared, there came a long procession of story films, with Western backgrounds of *primitive* justice, stories of the pioneer days across the rolling prairie, religious films, fast-moving comedies, and melodramas which began to variegate the film output. These pictures were quite unsophisticated, quite without subtlety, their simple outlines were heavily emphasised, the drama deepened, the emotions clearly expressed, emphatic and unadulterated. The early comedies, too, had a great deal in common with the still earlier trick and chase films. Quick surprises, unexpected immersions, cumulative action, pretentious people deflated, authoritative people made ridiculous, the mother revered, families re-united, justice done, villains ousted, hope and happiness restored among men. Bible stories and the lives of the saints, too, had a great following. These

films were part of the process which enabled the heterogeneous peoples of America to feed from their own roots and to grow mentally, emotionally and socially. In the cultural and historical development of mankind such simple stories enabled men, after thousands of years of repeated re-telling, to evolve from tribal to national ways, and habits of thought and action.

If we take the expression of the most primitive cultural feelings of mankind as a sound process of growth, it will be seen that, with the help of the film, the passage from the simple to the more complex ideas about the world was quick and easy, compared with the historical time in which these same ideas evolved in the historical development of mankind.

It has taken man hundreds of thousands of years to pass through the gradual changes from simple perceptions of the world, the hunt and the fight in self-defence and wrestling, the age of the medicine man and his miracles, the age-long periods of rough social justice in primitive pasturing and agricultural communities, and the strengthening of the moral and social sense without which no nation could have come into being. There is a great lesson here for our own film makers in this country, for if the aim is the world market, then we must catch up with—and follow—the evolutionary trend of the American film, that is, face forward, *towards* the encouragement of the moral and social sense, and not away from it. Our films must possess the cohesive quality of the best American productions: of binding and unifying peoples. The pleasures we must encourage are the *social* pleasures which strengthen society. We must not encourage the purely animal impulses, as if we were animals living for ourselves alone. And we must not encourage a delight in things for things' sake. People before property.

The forward moving evolutionary trend of the American film is not always consistent and regular in its forward movement. Organic processes are never consistently in one direction, never regular and neatly spaced out and timed like the calibrations on a clock face. The point to note is that the American film, despite many back-slidings in its history towards anti-social attitudes, despite instances of reverisons and sometimes of arrested growth, has gone forward, and is still going forward, though haltingly at times. Of no other film can this be said, certainly not of the British film. The British film, as it is at present, is not broad-based upon a world mass appeal. It has not grown organically, as has the American. The British film industry, like the film industries of other non-American countries, can only exist *because* of the American film. If there were no American films supplying four-fifths of our film fare in this country, there would be no cinemas for British films to be shown in.

And there would be no British film industry to make films for non-existent cinemas—a state of “nothing to eat, to wash down with nothing to drink.” The British film is thus like a barnacle clinging

to the hull of a ship. It has no organic, individual existence, as has the American. As it is constituted at present, the British film lives like a backward organism on the flesh of a larger, more complex, and more advanced organism. There is a parallel in this in nature which is not very pleasant to reflect upon, and yet the remedy lies in our hands. The advantages that the Americans possess in film making at the moment may be balanced by science and determination. Britain *could* lead the world in film making, as it has led in so many other branches of industry. But a great many ingrained prejudices and practices will have to be got rid of first.

CHAPTER SEVEN

IT MAY BE OBJECTED that the American film producers have got along quite well without even having heard of phylogenesis. Quite true. They may concern themselves very little with a direct interest in evolution or of modern psychology in the biological sense. There are some who say that the primary object of American film producers is to make money. But the point we are stressing is that of all the film makers in the world, the Americans are the only people who have been forced—that is the word—forced to make a scientific study of the needs of the world's consumers.

The word "scientific" is not meant here in the laboratory sense, but in the sense of testing out by trial and error the box-office results of films on real, sentient human beings of real flesh and blood, living in a real world. Film makers in countries outside America have not been under the necessity of studying consumer interest to the same extent. The existence of Government support and safely cotton-wool protected molly-coddling of film industries in countries outside America has saved these industries the trouble of making any serious attempt at understanding what is at the root of American success.

Now it is clear that, despite all the technical-mechanical advantages that the British film industry enjoys, the British film still suffers from a chronic lack of vital psychological ingredients, certain vitamins, which the best of the American films possess in abundance. If social, political and historical conditions in America have favoured the American film industry, and if there are certain lacks in our own product, it is a fairly simple matter to follow the methods of the bio-chemists, study and extract the vital elements in the American film, make a record of them, concentrate them and re-infuse the present weak British product with the results obtained from specialised, close analysis and examination.

In these days the lack of physical vitamins under succeeding letters of the alphabet can be made good by specially prepared products, the results of careful laboratory research. The Americans have no need of synthetic vitamins in their film product. Nature and their own social and historical evolution has favoured them abundantly. Everything has orchestrated towards a natural and

organic development of the American film industry. For America herself is an example of the phylogenetic principle which shows itself in the development of the American film industry. America has re-capitulated or telescoped into a space of about 150 years the social development that took hundreds of thousands of years in the Old World. At one and the same time there existed the primitive Stone Age culture of the Red Indians; slave society with the forcible enslavement of the Negroes, primitive mountain justice, beneficent missionary settlements; pioneer clearing of the vast prairie lands and an immeasurably increased speeding up of industrial development.

Just as the mixture of races and cultures along the coast of the Mediterranean facilitated the interchange and enrichment of ideas through trade and made the foundations of the earliest civilisations possible, so the mixture of nationals from almost every country in the world, and within the framework of Anglo-Saxon culture, speedily raised the edifice of American civilisation as we know it today. Although the Red Indians received a very raw deal, it was not long before the determination arose among the American people to oppose all forms of subjugation and all the evils that followed from slavery. Co-existent with the varying levels of civilisation, a new civilisation was being moulded in which great learning was encouraged, universities and scientific institutions established, many of them the best in the world.

When we see the close parallel between American national development and the evolution of the American cinema to its present dominant world position, it becomes increasingly clear that we cannot hope ever to meet American competition in this field unless we devote the highest priority to an intense study of the nature of the American film as it is at present and as it developed from its earliest historical beginnings over fifty years ago. The film is a far more complex form of presentation than the nearest thing to it—the theatrical stage. The Americans know it by actual, objective experience in making and marketing their product. The self-discipline the American film makers imposed upon themselves in voluntarily establishing, sponsoring and supporting the Hays organisation, which aims to put a veto upon immorality wherever it shows its head, proves how conscious the Americans were that the progress of the film industry lay *forward* to higher forms of social human behaviour, and not *backward* to earlier forms of human animal behaviour. The tendency in America is to study the ever evolving needs of the consumer. In this country, as far as our film makers are concerned, the consumer hardly counts.

In America, anything that may lower the standards of public decency is publicly decried. In Britain, common swear words are not only introduced in films and scattered broadcast for millions of minds to imbibe, but such words are even insisted upon when shown abroad. Thus Mr. Del Giudice, of Two Cities, one of the Rank

companies, demanded, probably in deference to his own queer notions of uplift that certain bar-room expressions in "In Which We Serve" *must* remain, despite the Hays office veto, or he would withdraw the film from the American market.

In the end it was Mr. Fillipo Del Giudice who had to do the climbing down. In this connection let the following extract from the *Daily Express* of June 29th, 1945, speaks for itself, thus:

NAUGHTY WORDS IN A GOOD WORLD SO HAYS BANS "HENRY V"

More and more British films are being banned in America because of naughty words. Latest victim of the "bad words" campaign is Shakespeare. "Henry V" has been banned by the Hays office because the words "damn" and "bastard" are uttered and there are references to the Diety. A cable received from America by "Henry V's" producers calls for a re-shooting of the offensive scenes to meet the rulings of the Hays production code. Laurence Olivier, the director and star now playing abroad to the B.L.A., will record the lines again on his return, but this will delay the American presentation of this £450,000 film by at least a month.

Two MORE

Two more films—British films—have brought down the wrath of the Hays office. One is "The Way to the Stars," now running at the London Pavilion, in which exception is taken to the word "hell" . . .

The £150,000 Gainsborough picture, "Caravan," now in production, has also been doctored by Dr. Hays. "God bless my soul" is regarded as irreverent, four instances of the word "damn" are banned, twelve other scenes are censored, a warning is given about "good taste" in gypsy dances, and the lyrics for the film are to be submitted for approval.

The *Express* critic probably knew of a good many more British films he could have mentioned which have not come up to Hays' standard but down to gutter level, and later we shall have something to add concerning "Henry V."

But apart from swear words, there is also a vast difference between American treatment of sex relationships and ours. In America, love between the sexes may reach the very heights of human tenderness and devotion, as in "For Whom the Bell Tolls," where some of Hemingway's crudities in the novel were cut to fit the film medium, and not in the manner of British film convention of fitting the film to square with the book. In this country, sex is either treated in the wishy-washy manner of "Love Affair" or linked to pathological states of mind, as in "The Man in Grey" and "Madonna of the Seven Moons," or dragged down through the putrid trails of brothel existence, as in "Fanny By Gaslight."

In America, study courses in the film are part of the curriculum in the majority of colleges and schools, and Chairs in the universities have also been endowed. Outstanding film craftsmen have been honoured by the universities of Chicago and New York. This is a stage in the appreciation of the film as vocation, as entertainment, and as a social force, that we in Britain are very far from having reached.

We see, therefore, that America is in a class by herself in the realm of film. Her film business men, unlike the film men of other countries, were willing and able to pioneer and navigate the industry through the unknown in order to reach their goal. If one looks back in a general way at American film history, it would almost seem as if it had been easy money all the way for the film chiefs. But any closer study will reveal that American film men had made all the possible mistakes; that they went up every conceivable back alley and *cul de sac* in common with their confreres of other countries. The big difference is that the American film business men did not stop in their own tracks as the film men of Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the Scandinavian countries had.

Being plain men who were not artificially propped up by the "art" conventions of a pre-film age, or by Government crutches, the Americans had perforce to profit by bitter experience. Mistaken ideas were abandoned when they were proved to be mistaken. Wrong methods were dropped when they were shown to be wrong. If an individual film maker here and there was unwilling or unable to abandon mistakes or wrong methods, there were scores of other film makers in America who could and did, and so they managed to weather the storms that were continually welling up to swamp them.

Reacting to the public taste, which was continually changing as the film was changing, the leading film makers in America responded quickly to a rapidly expanding public demand. They were perpetually on their toes, exercising their "hunches" as to what the public would want next. It was in this way that the early scenics were replaced by short, quickly told fictional films, and these, in turn, were replaced by the longer and still longer films. With every quantitative change there was a co-related qualitative change.

But that qualitative change which was necessary to support a successful long film could only be effected in the actual test on public reactions. Everything we know about Griffith, Chaplin, Mary Pickford, and their work, shows how true this is of every vital period of transition in the American film industry.

In countries outside America, on the other hand, there were certain cultural, social and political encouragements of an entirely opposite character which led film makers to various dead ends.

What is it that has held the British film industry bogged? We have

already shown the artificially nurtured, hothouse warmed and protected effects of the Quota Act as one of the reasons for the wilting appearance of the British film. Another reason is, that linked to Quota, and arising out of it, there is a lack of inducement to study and develop *the film as film*, a study which was forced upon the Americans by the sheer necessities of the market. This lack in Britain expresses itself in ways leading back to the past, back to the portrayal of earlier, animal, pre-social forms of behaviour.

This travelling-backward tendency is the main reason why there is recourse to what is thought by British film producers to be well established, well publicised, absolute unmistakable winners: Shakespeare and Shaw. The glory of Shakespeare and the notoriety of Shaw, it is hoped, will serve as compensating factors at the box-office for the lack of film sense and film craft. With ready-made "scripts," our film men are saved the trouble of turning out real scripts and real films. They need only sit back and let the shekels roll in. So they think, but what they think and what actually happens are two different things. The making of the Two Cities' "Henry V" took twice as long and almost twice as much money to make as was originally budgeted for. The making of Shaw's "Cæsar and Cleopatra," at Denham, went to the very limit of muddling through upon an unprecedented budget estimated at over a million five hundred thousand pounds, dragging on for months beyond schedule and holding up a long line of other films waiting to take the studio floors.

Yet anyone would have known, anyone but a film financier, that these subjects would either drag or become bogged in the making. You cannot make a film unless you know what a film is, unless you have a film script, unless you know the difference between the imagery of words and the direct, moving pictorialisation of the film medium which reduces the spoken or written word to a subordinate level. The success of the film "Pygmalion" was due less to Shaw than to the star player, Leslie Howard, and to the ever-popular Cinderella element in the story of the girl who was raised from rags to riches. Shaw's other film, "Major Barbara," was a well-known flop.

There are people in this country who are deterred from taking an active part for a moral clean up in present British film trends. They are of two groups. One stems from the literary world where freedom of expression has been a fundamental, jealously guarded tenet since Milton's *Areopagitica* and the earliest unauthorised versions of the Bible. What these good people appear to have forgotten is that Milton himself was quite firm in drawing the line between freedom of expression and licentiousness of expression. The one he upheld as forcibly as he denounced the other.

The second group who object to the exercise of moral self-restraint in British films are those who are strongly addicted to the ways of thought and life which was, and is, fairly general upon the

Continent of Europe. Their attitude is more or less: Anything goes, or, are we not all adults? Why not have "adult" films?

The attitude of despising the moral virtues left its high-water mark in the 1890's, the heydey of the Beardsleys and Oscar Wildes. It was then that the gilded youths became the mirror of fashion. The reformed, Puritan-Christian trends in British social life that gave this country the sobriety, stability and dependability over the four hundred years since the Reformation was set in reverse. It was then that the moral purpose, the responsible outlook that made "the word of an Englishman" as good as his bond all over the world came to be looked upon by the "smartest" people a matter of mere goody-goodness. "Out with the old frumps." "Overboard with moral values and moral restraints."

From those early nineties until the second war's outbreak in 1939, cynicism, sourness and disbelief had seeped like an acid into almost every department of our social life, until social thought and social action had gone nearly quite out of synchronisation. We had entered a period of moral and cultural confusion in which "unshockability" became the leading cult, with Bernard Shaw as its high priest. But this attitude of "cocking a snook" at the moral conventions was seldom ever grafted upon a sense of humour. From Swinburne, Aubrey Beardsley and Oscar Wilde; to Clive Bell, Havelock Ellis to Ethel Mannin, and Professor Joad to Bernard Shaw, we trace the thread of this remarkable philosophy. Not for them the work of the humble tiller of the fields or the patient artisan working in a real, objective world for the sustenance of men. For the élite the life of the senses or that of the butterfly fluttering from flower to flower. Nature! Beauty! Truth! Pleasure! Marriage—a property device of the *bourgeois* (now, happily, an extinct race!). Marriage—a system of sex slavery!

It was no time before the accent in the literary world found its stress, not upon the social virtues, as in the earlier days of Dickens, Trollope and Thackeray, but upon crime. Today, hardly a "modern" novel appears but is garnished with a murder or two and spiced with every known and unknown form of sexual licence. In this gradual transition, spread over sixty years, hardly anyone seems to have noticed that the Christian outlook has been put into complete reverse; that instead of proclaiming the innate goodness of man, the printed word was, and is, being used to spread the most bitter cynicism and disbelief in the social and moral ties, a philosophy which has been saddled with the name of its first articulate exponent, the Marquis de Sade.

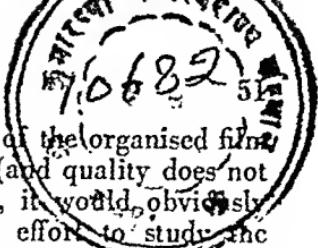
De Sade, the first to hold up the guttering torch by which so many of our "moderns" could grope their way, told the world contemptuously that only evil men flourish. He lamented that the power for evil possessed by one individual was so limited. Living in France in the eighteenth century, he could not, of course, foresee what remarkable achievements his active disciples in Nazi Germany were

to accomplish when endowed with State power. Hitler, brimming with ecstasy as he gazed at the devastation he had wantonly created on the Polish battlefield in 1939, says: "I'm so happy. I hope everyone at home is happy." De Sade complained that a man could only achieve a murder or two in his own lifetime. Imagine the joys he missed in being born a couple of centuries too early. He might have sat by Hitler's side, viewing, to the strains of an orchestra, the death agonies of thousands in the gas chambers of Lublin and Belsen. Here, indeed, is the culminating horror of the cult which starts years before as a germ of an idea among a dilettante clique and then grows, under suitable conditions, to become an accepted mode of conduct by millions of Germans.

It is easier to fall than to climb. It is easier to follow the line of least resistance and to succumb to such "pleasures" as "The Man in Grey," with its naked Sadism, or to "Fanny by Gaslight," with its sexual profligacy. It is easy, but the price we pay for such "treats" is high and the penalties are hard and inexorable. The wages of sin is death—literally, factually, absolutely. Like the "pleasures" of the opium den; the "delights" of Sadism in films have to be increased with each subsequent experience. The effect of the first small dose diminishes as the craving increases. This is where Dr. Hays comes in, the Doctor who has been the object of so many sneers. Not that Dr. Hays is infallible. Like any human being who has made anything, Hays has made mistakes—his office has recently allowed a number of Sadistic American films to escape his eagle eye. But despite that, it is better to have even half a Hays than no Hays at all, as was the case in Weimar Germany, which evolved a tiny little, apparently harmless, really quite "insignificant" silent film of the purest Sadism, "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari," the veriest germ cell of that cold-blooded, murderous Nazi State of the near future. And thus, eventually, died Germany, feeding upon Sadism from little to more. And not only did the German social structure perish, but the German film industry with it. The health of a nation and the moral health of its film industry are inseparable.

The problem for the British film industry to solve is the problem of infusing into its product the vitamin ingredients, the lack of which precludes the British film from being a world mental food. There are several of these absent vitamins, but the chief is that strong social and moral sense by which man has climbed from animal status to—Man.

The Quota Act, while it has preserved the British film industry physically, has crippled it mentally and morally. Not only has it saved British film makers the trouble of finding out what is the true nature of film, how it differs from the theatrical presentation and print, and what is the true reason for American quality and American world film supremacy. The British film industry has been encouraged to ignore and even to deride the organisational basis of the American film industry, the lynch pin of which is the Hays office.



Now, if there were really any serious move of the organised film makers of this country to compete in quality (and quality does not necessarily involve extravagant expenditure), it would obviously have to express itself, first, in an intensive effort to study the American film, scientifically, not superficially. The study of the American film cannot be properly separated from a study of the history and organisational stages through which the American film industry has passed. The American film cannot be properly understood unless we understand the background and development of the physical organising apparatus which has made and marketed the film through all the varying channels, just as a river, its flow and character, cannot be understood apart from its physical mountain sources, its bed and its banks.

The history of the American film runs parallel with the history of the American film business. Its course displays, at times, periods of comparative placidity when nothing much of importance seemed to be happening, sharply land-marked by short but intensive periods of crisis. These crises invariably coincided with those moments of decisive change in the basic character of the film itself, brought about by the pressure of a changing public demand. At the scene stage in the film's history, the organisation of making and distributing and showing to the public was of the simplest character. As the scene gave place to the short story film, and the short was replaced by the long film; as the public fancy began to focus upon prominent stars and the stars became economic bargaining factors in the industry; as the store shows gave way to the specially built Electric Palace and then to the super-cinema, so the character of the industry changed. The relations between players and film makers, between film makers and distributors, between distributors and cinema owners changed, sometimes with a suddenness that swept one or other of the contending parties off the scene.

One of the greatest of all crises which the American film industry has had to weather, and from which it successfully emerged, was that immediately preceding the formation of the Hays organisation in 1922. This organisation, although it would appear to be a voluntary move on the part of the film makers, is to a great extent the biggest single monument in America to the force of public pressure.

In the years between 1913 and 1919 there was not only a developing change towards longer films and closer psychological treatment that go with longer films and stories, but the war had effected a degree of loosening of sex morals. The term, "sex appeal," was invented and widely used, not only in praise of film stars who were so gifted. It was also used as a selling point to commend almost every article of commerce, from sock-suspenders to motor-cars. At first, film makers were a bit chary in exploiting this cult, because they realised that though the blatant exploitation of sex might be profitable, it might put an end to the cinema as a family institution. Nevertheless, this cautious attitude, being a long term restraint,

could not hold out completely against the deteriorating cultural situation that had developed in the theatre and in print after the war of 1914-1918.

At first, plays, novels and magazine stories were adapted for screening with many modifications. It was realised that a book may be read in private, that stage plays were mainly restricted to special audiences in the larger cities, but that the film, by its nature, and by the nature of its audience, could not be as libertarian as the other forms of presentation had become.

Benjamin B. Hampton, in his authoritative *History of the Movies* (Williams and Norgate), comments on the situation as it existed before the Hays office was formed:

Many stage plays that enjoyed long runs and high praise were never made into pictures because of sex presentations that would have been condemned by tens of millions of movie patrons who never saw any of the plays current in metropolitan centres or read any of the popular novels depicting the problems of matrimony or the urges of flaming youth. The widest horizon of the overwhelming majority was bounded by the movies, daily and weekly newspapers, farm journals and the church.

Curiously enough, though Hampton rightly points out that salaciousness in films would have been condemned by the millions, he forgets this on the next page and roundly criticises the "professional reformers and fanatics," as he calls them, who were pressing for the formation of censorship boards. He forgets that in these days of sub-division of labour, it is sufficient for a few to become the spokesmen of the many. Those few "professional reformers and fanatics" were obviously, instinctively expressing the concern of the many when the first signs of bawdiness were beginning to appear in films. They knew that the breakdown of sex morality, if allowed to proceed unchecked to its biological end, must lead, in stages, to the final disruption of society itself. Therefore, on the principle of a stitch in time saving nine, those fanatical reformers were absolutely right, though we might concede Hampton a point that they may have been a bit too forthright.

Hampton says, further:

Neglecting to observe the constant publication in all magazines and newspapers of sex-appealing advertising and illustrations, and generally ignoring the frankness of the stage and printed novels, professional reformers insisted that movies everywhere be submitted to rigorous censorship.

This is meant as a reproach, but the "professional reformers" were right again. They had arrived at the conclusion that we ourselves have stressed at the beginning of this book, that the new film medium is the dominant form of expression in our age. Those "reformers" had no need to rationalise it all out to the last detail. Their innermost social instincts told them that if you set the domin-

ant on the right course, the subordinate forms of expression, like stage plays and novels, would, in time, fall into place. The greater includes the lesser. They realised that the film presents a visual life-like example of conduct which may be quickly followed, while print and plays lag far behind in their effect upon the public mind, both morally and quantitatively.

The conduct of the characters on the screen soon became inextricably entwined with the private lives of the players who played those characters. A strong demand arose that the stars and players themselves should, in their own lives, not fall below the moral standards they set upon the screen. Here, again, we see the working of that instinctive, mass realisation that life and "art" are integral and not confined to separate watertight compartments. Several major scandals in the film world, notably those connected with Fatty Arbuckle and Wallace Reed, brought this question to a head at about the same time as that of the censorship problem. To quote Hampton once more:

Anger and disgust aroused by the enormous salaries of players, followed by this series of sensational scandals and the torrent of falsehoods, enabled professional reformers and politicians to rally to their support thousands of sincere, well-intentioned ministers, church members, club women and school teachers . . . Every star, every player, every executive, was under suspicion, as any day might bring an exposé of one's favourite hero or heroine as a dope addict, a drunkard or a sex degenerate. The adulation lavished on screen celebrities had been extravagant, and more unreasoning was the barrage of suspicion and venom directed at yesterday's idols.

Hampton says "unreasoning," but it was not altogether unreasonable. The reason for that social perturbation and agitation is deeply embedded in the great English cultural tradition and historical memory traces that America had inherited from Mother England. The spirit of the Pilgrim Fathers who left England on the "Mayflower" was being kept alive to preserve that which the Fathers had sought to establish—a clean and free society, a virile community proclaiming the equality of man under the fatherhood of God, and it is highly significant that, despite the influx of so many other cultures into America, it was this spirit of Anglo-Saxon opposition to profligacy which, as the dominant American culture, took the lead in the agitation for a healthy American film and film industry.

The preservation, the holding together of society itself, is closely linked to this question of sex and moral conduct. The film makers of America have, in the main, realised both by practice and by outside public pressure, that it pays to help keep society together. To destroy society through propagating loose conduct would be, to place the matter at its lowest, to kill the goose that lays the golden

eggs. This realisation is still vivid in the American social consciousness today, despite occasional lapses.

Just how closely American social thought is linked to ancient English tradition may be seen by the remarkable resemblance between the out and out, forthright agitation in favour of a moral outlook on film and filmcraft in America and the agitation in England against the early, formative theatre plays in the days before Shakespeare. The invective employed by the Elizabethan "professional reformers and fanatics" against the contemporary theatre was an abrasive that helped to clean up the theatre stage before it could evolve to a worthier position in our social life. Writing of *The Theatre* and *The Curtain* in Shoreditch, on the outskirts of the City of London (where *Curtain Road* still survives to perpetuate the site), John Northbrooke, in 1577, said :

Satan hath not a more speedy way and fitter school to work and to teach his desire to bring men and women into the snare of concupiscence and filthy lusts than those places and plays and theatres . . . It hath stricken such a blind zeal into the hearts of the people that they shame not to say and affirm openly that plays are as good as sermons and that they sometimes learn as much or more at a play than they do at God's word preached. Many can tarry at a vain play two or three hours, whereas they will not abide scarce one hour at a sermon.

Further, Northbrooke takes the plays of his time to task in a manner that might fittingly apply to some of our home-made films at this very day :

. . . At these plays you shall learn all things that pertain to craft, mischief, deceit and filthiness. If you will learn how to be false and deceive your husbands, or husbands their wives, how to play the harlot, how to obtain a harlot's love, how to ravish, how to béguiile, how to betray, to flatter, lie, swear, how to allure to whoredom, how to murder, how to poison, how to disobey and rebel against Princes, to consume treasures prodigally, to move to lusts, to blaspheme, to sing filthy songs, to be proud, to mock, scoff, deride . . . shall ye not learn at such interludes how to practice them?

The Elizabethan "professional reformers and fanatics" realised what we in our day tend to forget, that mortal danger threatens that society which encourages loose conduct and anti-social behaviour either through rhetoric or in acted performance. The Elizabethans understood quite well that the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount, and even the much earlier code of Hamurabbi, were born of the painful experience of human societies. Time and time again, communities saw that without some definite codified body of law, human society must inevitably disintegrate. It is naturally easier to kick over the traces, and to forget these codes, than to conform to them. That is why people have had to be reminded of their existence

again, and yet again, sometimes at the cost of immeasurable pain and suffering, as at the present moment in Europe.

In "Hecuba," Agamemnon the King of Greece says:

For 'tis the common interest of mankind,
Of every individual, every State,
That he who hath transgressed shall suffer ill
And Fortune crown the efforts of the virtuous.

CHAPTER EIGHT

WITH THE FORMATION of this voluntary association in America, the Hays office, we see the same historical process at work which produced codes of human behaviour in the past. This does not mean that the Hays office code has always been rigidly adhered to in the making of films by the member companies. Far from it. Indeed, the code has often been flagrantly transgressed. What is important is, that the existence of Hays and Hays' supervision, advice and assistance has saved the American film industry from going to pieces and dissolving into chaos.

As we have already said, half Hays is better than none at all, just as the existence of the Christian code is a good thing because it offers all men, weak and fallible as they are, an aim, a goal, a standard to live up to. The absence or the opposite of such a code may be seen pictured in the Nazi regime. Whatever faults we may find in the behaviour of Christians, in particular instances where they appear to give only lip service to Christianity, we can only truly appreciate the value of the Christian code when we see the effect of practising and preaching its opposite in Germany. We can truly appreciate and enjoy freedom when we have had a taste of confinement and slavery. So it is with the American film industry's code known as Hays. The fact alone that such a code exists, and is, with some exceptions, mainly adhered to, has saved the Americans from going the way of Europe, where the film industries have drifted like derelict wrecks with no moral or social impulse to keep them on a steady course.

Benjamin Hampton gives a very good description of the character of the Hays code, and how it started:

The producers of America dealt with the censorship menace (by the then Municipal and State bodies which were becoming legion), by creating a system of "self-censorship," with Hays as the highest court of appeal; his powers beginning with the selection of material for the screen and following through to the elimination of dangerous or doubtful scenes in complete films. While none of the manufacturers are legally bound by his decisions, and at times there are earnest disagreements between various producers and Hays and his staff, the studios

have held to the restrictions imposed by the "Czar" in avoiding novels and stage plays and specific stories and plays that might give offence to screen audiences. For the most part, the screen eschewed the increasing latitude of the stage, as a glance at the rules adopted by the studios for the guidance of their writers and directors will show. The corporations comprising the Hays organisation—substantially all the producers and distributors in the United States—unanimously agreed to the "self-discipline and regulation" of a code, the intent of which was to ensure establishment of general principles. The code was amplified by a series of "particular applications" as follows:

CRIMES AGAINST THE LAW

These shall never be presented in such a way as to show sympathy with the crime as against law or justice, or to inspire others with a desire for imitation.

1. *Murder.*

- (a) The technique of murder must be presented in a way that will not inspire imitation.
- (b) Brutal killings are not to be presented in detail.
- (c) Revenge in modern times shall not be justified.

2. *Methods of crime should not be explicitly presented.*

- (a) Theft, robbery, safe-ereaing and dynamiting of trains, mines, buildings, etc., should not be detailed in method.
- (b) Arson must be subject to the same safeguards.
- (c) The use of firearms should be restricted to essentials.
- (d) Methods of smuggling should not be presented.

3. *Illegal traffic must never be presented.*

4. The use of liquor in American life, when not required by the plot or for proper characterisation, will not be shown.

SEX

The sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home shall be upheld. Pictures shall not infer that low forms of sex relationships are the accepted or common thing.

1. Adultery, sometimes necessary plot material, must not be explicitly treated or justified, or presented attractively.

2. Scenes of passion should not be introduced when not essential to the plot. In general, passion should so be treated that the scenes do not stimulate the lower and baser elements.

3. *Seduction or rape:*

- (a) They should never be more than suggested, and only when essential for the plot, and even then never shown by explicit method.

(b) They are never the proper subject for comedy.

4. Sex perversion or any inference of it is forbidden.

5. White slavery shall not be treated.

6. Miscegenation is forbidden.
7. Sex hygiene and venereal diseases are not subjects for motion pictures.
8. Scenes of actual child birth, in fact or in silhouette, are never to be presented.
9. Children's sex organs are never to be exposed.

VULGARITY

The treatment of low, disgusting, unpleasant, though not necessarily evil, subjects should be subject always to the dictates of good taste and regard for the sensibilities of the audience.

OBSCENITY

Obscenity in word, gesture, reference, song, joke or by suggestion is forbidden.

DANCES

Dances which emphasise indecent movements are to be regarded as obscene.

PROFANITY

Profanity or vulgar expressions, however used, are forbidden.

COSTUME

1. Complete nudity is never permitted. This includes nudity in fact or in silhouette, or any lecherous or licentious notice thereof by other characters in the picture.

2. Dancing costumes intended to permit undue exposure or indecent movements in the dance are forbidden.

RELIGION

1. No film or episode may throw ridicule on any religious faith.

2. Ministers of religion, in their character as such, should not be used as comic characters or as villains.

3. Ceremonies of any definite religion should be carefully and respectfully handled.

NATIONAL FEELINGS

1. The use of the flag shall be consistently respectful.
2. The history, institutions, prominent people and citizenry of other nations shall be presented fairly.

TITLES

Salacious, indecent or obscene titles shall not be used.

REPELLANT SUBJECTS

The following subjects must be treated within the careful limits of good taste:

1. Actual hangings or electrocutions as legal punishments for crime.
2. Third degree methods.
3. Brutality and possible gruesomeness.
4. Branding of people or animals.
5. Apparent cruelty to children or animals.
6. Surgical operations.

This, then, is the body of law for the American film industry, based upon the most profound codes of morals and social preservation which have their roots deep in past human social experience. This is the body of law to which American film producers have mainly conformed. The Hays office is the appointed organ of the member producers which sees that the Hays law is enforced and the members each kept in tow. But the Hays office exercises yet another function.

If you get into the habit of conforming to law and practising self-restraint on the moral question, you will develop the parallel habit, through practice, of creating entertainment qualities in your films. Without general principles, without a code, without established and recorded theory joined to practise, without a set of rules to which members must conform, no social activity can possibly take place. Imagine doctors without the British Medical Association, which demands a standard of decent, professional behaviour from its members. Imagine solicitors and barristers without a Law Society. Imagine a Trade Union, a Friendly Society or a Tennis Club without a code of rules for members. Imagine running the business of a nation without a Government or Parliament. If you can imagine these things you will gain some idea of the British film industry. On the question of restraint, good taste, morality, religious susceptibilities or true entertainment qualities, there is no code, no body of theory and practise, no law, no rules, no Hays office. There is, of course, a British Board of Film Censors, whose status is recognised in law, but whose certificate has often adorned films for exhibition which are a disgrace to our good name, both here and in the Dominions. Mr. Rank has been trying hard to induce his film makers to study the Hays code. It is one thing to be able to read a list of instructions. It is quite another thing to understand them when read. It is still another thing to be in sympathy with them, or to know how to apply them in film practice. British film makers have had the Hays code in front of them for the last twenty years. How much use have they made of it?

It is under these conditions of willy-nilly moral chaos that our own film makers expect to compete with the Americans. In their loud lamentations about the difficulties of getting on to the American market, they leave the question of film quality out of account. They leave the American and Colonial consumer, the ultimate arbiter, out of account, and with all their gnashing of teeth at the spectacle of American film supremacy, it never once occurs to any of our film

makers, that the fault lies with faulty product, which is due to faulty organisation or lack of organisation in the industry, as well as a lack of understanding as to what is at the root of American success.

They expect to make the best of both worlds; to make and sell films at home for a Government-protected home market, and then to sell the same product abroad, where there is no protection, where normal, commercial considerations of value for money have the utmost free play. They want their cake; eat it here, and have it abroad as well. Yet this childish attitude is persisted in, year in and year out. Here, for instance, is Mr. Michael Balcon, a leading film producer in this country, writing in *The Kine Weekly*, the organ of the Trade, on January 13th, 1944, as follows:—

I have pointed out repeatedly in public that, up to the time of writing this article, to the best of my knowledge, no British film has been sold to America for widespread distribution in 1943. It seems even to have surprised some of our American friends, but since there has been no denial of my statement it would appear that such indeed is the case, despite the fact that I can think of at least fifteen films made in the period which have deserved good marketing across the Atlantic.

Not a single British film sold in America for 1943 and Mr. Balcon is surprised and hurt. Well, so long as Mr. Balcon persists in the notion that there is some kind of conspiracy in America to keep British films out, so long will Mr. Balcon continue to miss the real point at issue on the question of marketing abroad, and that point can be summed up in one word—quality. If Mr. Balcon insists that there is little to choose between British and American film quality, despite the overwhelming evidence that the difference is as wide as the poles, then there is nothing more to be said. But if Mr. Balcon is, indeed, an earnest seeker after truth, a simple analogy may offer him an illuminating clue.

Two armies confront each other for battle. One is split up in "penny packets," without a unified command, without a co-ordinated aim, and with no central plan of operations. The army opposite knows exactly where it is going, and why. Its units have placed their entire confidence in a unified command at their head, who are working for a definite aim with a systematised plan and a code that has stood the test in the past. All other things being equal, which of these two armies are likely to win? That is more or less how matters stand between the British film industry on the one side and the purposeful, unified American film industry under the Hays code and direction.

If Mr. Balcon has any doubt that this is a true picture of the situation, perhaps we may bring the lesson home to him by referring to a particular British film with which he is more than well acquainted: "Champagne Charlie," with Tommy Trinder in the title part. Mr. Balcon himself produced this film some time after

he had written the above quoted lament in *The Kine Weekly*. It was made under his own supervision at his own studios, in Ealing, near London, Great Britain—that is to say, in a non-Hays' film-producing country.

Now let us try and recall the theme and substance of that picture and set against the "Champagne Charlie" story the following clause from the Hays code:

VULGARITY

The treatment of low, disgusting, unpleasant, though not necessarily evil, subjects, should be subject always to the dictates of good taste and regard for the sensibilities of the audience.

So, without benefit of Hays, the making of "Champagne Charlie" was blithely proceeded with. And what is the fundamental character of this picture? Certainly, it is not an evil subject in the manner of so many other films we could mention, but most certainly it is unpleasant, if not in bad taste. The policy of restraint in film making which the Hays office seeks to impose is as valid as self-restraint in a civilised human being. No one but a 100 per cent. purist would see anything wrong in an occasional sip of an alcoholic beverage taken in moderation, but a person who drinks to excess is a sorry sight and a problem to his fellows. The fault in that person's mental make-up is a lack of a self-imposed code of restraint.

"Champagne Charlie" suffers from a similar lack. It has only one theme from beginning to end, with slight variations on the theme—drink. The chief character is a music hall comedian who, half-a-century or so ago, achieved fame with singing "Champagne Charlie is my name," and the whole film is concerned with this comedian's career during which he enters into competition with a rival in order to outvie him in songs about drink. Between the two comedians we get songs about champagne, songs about beer, beer, glorious beer, about gin, about rum, about whisky and goodness knows what else. What a lop-sided, one track, cock-eyed portrayal of English life in the 'eighties. And what a way to commend ourselves to the American public! What is the difference between drinking to excess in an individual and singing, singing and singing about drinking, drinking and drinking in a film? The Americans often give us films about the old-time music hall, but they give us colour and depth, and closely observed human characterisation, and, above all—variety. Variety of character, variety of scene and song, and some kind of moral balance to their stories. They are not so bankrupt of invention as to make one idea suited for a four or five minute sequence, stretch out and drag out the full length of a ninety-minute picture.

But let us hasten to assure Mr. Balcon that this criticism is not being levelled at his production exclusively. The faults, and there are others in "Champagne Charlie," are endemic in the British film industry generally. These faults are so fundamental and deep-

rooted that nothing but a fundamental delving into causes and a thorough reorganisation, plus a change in the Quota Act, will effect a cure. Anything less is sheer beating the air. Anything less is plain self-deception. Anything less is like thinking that a group or an industry without cohesion and a code has a chance against a unified and organised industry.

Before a group can be organised effectively, it must have a common aim, a common language, a unified direction and a trusted leadership. Anarchy, or non-conformity, is fatal to success, and if there is one single factor before every other which is working against the chances of the British film becoming a world force, able to meet the American film on its own ground, it is anarchy—social and moral anarchy.

To re-assure Mr. Balcon still further on this point, that not his alone, but most British films, suffer from this lack of social principle, and that his production unit has not been singled out for criticism, let us apply the same Hays office measuring rod to one or two other films made by the group operating under the banner of Mr. J. Arthur Rank.

A film which was made in the dark days of 1942, to cheer us up, was one about the underground anti-Nazi movement in Belgium under German occupation. It was called "Uncensored," and was directed by Anthony Asquith. This film was clearly destined to be one of the rungs on the ladder which led Mr. Asquith to the making of the delectable "Fanny By Gaslight," a year or two later. Let us think of "Uncensored" for a moment in relation to the following ruling in the Hays office code:

OBSCENITY

Obscenity in word, gesture, reference, song, joke or by suggestion is forbidden.

Right at the start, "Uncensored" opens with a comedian singing a song before a cabaret audience, about a lady who was walking down the boulevard "with her little bear behind," but so that this suggestive pun on "bare" should not appear too outrageous, the comedian trails a toy bear on wheels across the stage at the end of the performance. A little later, a Gestapo official goes down into a cellar where certain Belgian printers are at work. He is searching for the secret anti-Nazi press. The printers, pretending to be working at their legitimate business, hastily cover up the type set of the illegal newspaper with a sheet of white paper covering the said type-set lying on the table. When the Nazi leaves, one of the printers peels off the sheet of paper the Nazi was sitting on, and holding it aloft, calls out with schoolboy glee: "Look, he has printed *Le Belge Libre* with his behind." That makes at least two references to behinds. There are other unsavoury references in the film.

From little to more. In the course of Mr. Asquith's successful career in the British film industry, which, as we have said, is an

industry which works to no accepted social or moral code, we arrive at last at his "Fanny By Gaslight," one of the main themes of which is procuring and brothel-keeping. Let us see how this film measures up to another of the clauses in the Hays code:

SEX

The sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home shall be upheld. Pictures shall not infer that low forms of sex relationship are the accepted or common thing.

Well, Mr. Asquith, where do we go from "Fanny By Gaslight"? What is there next to show in that order of progression? All we need now is to give public displays of actual—not acted—rape, and actual—not acted—murder, as at the last stages of dissolution and disruption of the Roman Empire, and the last stages of the Nazi German Empire, and we, too, as a nation, and as an Empire, would be heading for the last round-up. Yes, Mr. Asquith, that is how it works. That is what happens when a disruptive tendency is allowed to develop from its germinal stages, unnoticed and unchecked.

Let us take the work of another well-known team in British films and see whether the path they have been pursuing is likely to lead to world market acceptance. Let us glance at that masterpiece of Technicolor made by those close inseparables, Director Michael Powell and Script Writer Emeric Pressburger, "The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp." Made in Britain at the height of a war of liberation against Nazism, this film was charged with subtle anti-British feeling peppered with love and respect for the German. This film, had it been tested in the script by any kind of common sense social code in the national interest, would never have seen the light and much sweat and treasure would have been saved for worthier uses. There are at least three clauses in the Hays code, which, had the script been subjected to the code, have invalidated the making of the film from the start. These are:

PROFLANITY

Pointed profanity or vulgar expressions, however used, are forbidden.

NATIONAL FEELINGS

1. The use of the Flag shall be consistently respectful.
2. The history, institutions, prominent people and citizenry of other nations shall be presented fairly.

As to the last point, we are at least entitled to expect that the history, institutions and prominent people of our own, as well as of other nations, should be respected. Now, whatever we may think about David Low's cartoon creation of Colonel Blimp in the *Evening Standard*, it can be said, in fairness, that it does set off a certain obtuse and irascible state of mind which was fairly common before 1939, but which seems rather dated just now. In a political cartoon,

printed on paper, it is legitimate to make your point as sharply as the usages of political controversy will allow.

But a film which portrays a living, breathing, speaking human being, whose every action and intonation is watched, and heard, and absorbed by millions of people, is not the same thing as a few skilful pencil lines dashed across a sheet of paper. The rules that govern satire have to be infinitely more stringent in film than in the satirical expressions customary in print, whether in cartoon, picture or in words. Those rules for film exist even though the Powell-Pressburgers, Asquiths and Del Giudices may not be aware of them; and not knowing about them cannot be accepted as a plea.

In "The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp" there are instances of boorishness bordering on vulgarity, as when Sub-Lieutenant Wilson barges into a room and pushes a girl aside with his elbow as he does so. Another is when Wilson shouts and bawls at his commanding officer in the Turkish Bath. This could hardly be called respect for the institutions and prominent people of the nation as required by the Hays code. There are other derogatory incidents, but on this question of respect for the national symbol, the Flag, and to the highest military honour, the V.C., how does it come about that Blimp, in the film, the very epitome of dithering ineptitude, is endowed from the start with the V.C.? How does it come about that as a foil and a counter to Blimp, we are presented with the good-looking, sympathetic, all-knowing, all-winning German with the pompous, dignified monicker Kretschmar-Schuldorf? How is it that, far from the British Flag being respected, or the British uniform honoured, we see the jack-booted marching feet of German Uhlans wiping their mud-covered soles on the British Coat of Arms placed at the entrance of the British Embassy in Berlin, and we see a mob of caged German prisoners of war, in an English camp, turning their backs on Blimp wearing the King's uniform? How is it that, in the middle of a war of survival against the vilest menace ever encountered in our history, an enemy is presented with sympathy and an Englishman, a high officer and a V.C., is treated with contumely?

The answer is the same for this as for innumerable other British films—anarchy, anarchy of thought and irresponsibility.

"The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp" was for a time banned for export, but the curious thing is that one of "Blimp's" predecessors, "49th Parallel," made by the same team, was supported, encouraged and partially financed by the Ministry of Information. Anyone with half an eye could have seen the germs of "Blimp" sprouting from the script of "49th Parallel." Anyone, except those responsible at the Ministry of Information.

In "49th Parallel," too, there are instances of gross disrespect to our national feeling, as when a Nazi tears down the picture of the King and Queen off the wall and carves out a swastika in its place. But let us be scrupulously fair to Powell-Pressburger. They are quite capable of adhering to the Hays precept of respect for the

Flag when they have a mind to. This, indeed, is proved by the meticulous reverence with which they handle the incident of the Flag at the beginning of "49th Parallel." With solemn and respectful ceremony, the crew of a surfaced submarine are shown standing on board in rigid attention, gazing upon the Flag with sublime awe as it floats gradually up to mast height, fluttering in the breeze. The only minor, "insignificant" detail, of course, is that the emblem in question is the German Nazi naval Flag, and the captain and crew are Nazis, loudly *heiling Hitler*.

In a little book, published in 1944, *The Shame and Disgrace of Colonel Blimp* (Sidneyan Society, 1s. 6d.), the present authors gave chapter and verse from the actual material of the Powell-Pressburger film, "The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp," proving, point by point and up to the hilt, that the substance of all Powell-Pressburger's work was a rabid anti-Britishism which was almost pathological in its intensity. But we are not concerned with the mental state of Mr. Powell and Mr. Pressburger. We are concerned at the terrible harm being done to the minds of our people. We are concerned at the slanders about the British that are being fed to cinema patrons overseas by films of the Powell-Pressburger school. We are concerned to notice that the black-hearted bitterness against Britain, which was implicit in their war-time output, "The Spy in Black," "One of Our Aircraft is Missing," "49th Parallel," "Canterbury Tale" and "Blimp," is now explicit, openly and sneeringly anti-British in "A Matter of Life and Death," now that the war is over. (Called in America "Stairway to Heaven.")

Now, at last, the mask is off. Now it is safe to do openly in "A Matter of Life and Death" what could only be done slyly and covertly in "Blimp" and "49th Parallel." Now it is safe to attempt to do during peace what the Goebbels-Hitler-Himmler crew failed to do in the war—bash the British in the sight of our Allies and create mischief between us and the Americans. Now it is safe to set up an American who was supposed to have fought with Washington against the British as a spokesman for the most obnoxious anti-British mouthings ever heard from a British screen. Now it is quite in order to set up this character who, in Powell-Pressburger's own words, "hates the guts" of the British with a venomous spleen bordering on Nazi lunacy. Now it is quite permissible to set the French against the British, the Irish against the British, the Russians against the British, the South Africans against the British, and the Chinese and the Indians against the British. Now it is permissible for Powell-Pressburger to snarl like curs, and like curs, turn and bite the hand that fed them during all those years of bitter strife. Now it is right for Powell-Pressburger to do in "A Matter of Life and Death" exactly what the Nazis did when in power: blame one man, who himself is quite innocent of any particular crime, for all the alleged sins his "race" or "nation" was supposed to have committed in

the past, which is what Powell-Pressburger do to Squadron-Leader Carter in the film.

What is the explanation of this venomous state of mind? It can only be understood as an exercise of the subconscious, just as the Nazi, or Fascist mind is a mind in which the subconscious or pre-conscious, or the immoral or anti-social, has triumphed over the conscious or socially moral. If you were to pass a German Nazi or an Italian Fascist in the street, you would hardly notice any outward sign that the fellow is any different from any other person. He looks like a human being. He has a head, two arms, two legs and a body, and seems to walk, talk, eat and dress just like you and me, but there the resemblance ends. The difference begins when you notice his mental processes which form an unmistakable complex. Once you recognise this complex, you will find that it manifests itself in an uncanny similar fashion in a Nazi or a certain type of film maker.

Another characteristic of the sub-conscious is that, like the elephant, it never forgets. Resentments, jealousies and evil aspirations, which in a normal moral person are rigorously repressed, come up at times in dreams. They are always stored up in the mind, but the healthy person manages to get the better of them. The average Nazi, Fascist, or the fantasy-mongering film maker, allows these dreams to get the better of him. As Freud has explained, these dreams never come out as straightforward interpretations of past events. They become mixed up in an extraordinary kaleidoscopic narrative of symbols which, to the ordinary person, doesn't make sense, but which is as clear as day to the practised psycho-analyst.

This is where we come to the interesting point about "A Matter of Life and Death." There are, today, probably thousands of Southern Irishmen who, no matter what the British have done and suffered since 1939 for the freedom of the world (which, of course, includes Eire), can never forgive, because, again like the elephant and the sub-conscious, they can never forget. The resentments of centuries are carefully, almost lovingly, stored up and trotted out against the British as occasion demands. Among these Irish are one or two film makers and one or two very famous and very venerable playwrights, who all, funnily enough, are offered facilities for the exercise of their spleen only in England. So much for the film making Irishman with a grudge.

Link all this up with the deepest and the most ludicrous misconceptions and prejudices against Britain of the average Central European intellectual, and everything is set for the making of films which culminate in "A Matter of Life and Death." In most films made in Britain, under the ægis of Central Europeans, British ways of life and thought, in their depth and meaning, are never presented, because they cannot be, because they are seen and heard only through the eyes and ears of the Central European who sees and hears *only the things that strike him as prominent in our lives*. This

is extremely noticeable in "A Matter of Life and Death." For instance. Cricket is a matter of some interest to Englishmen. But it is not the *dominant* interest. The Central European mind, however, thinks it is. The Central European mind sees and hears the Englishman's cricket, but it does not grasp—it cannot grasp—what is behind and beneath the surface of cricket: the deeply embedded *idea* of cricket as fair play, as playing the game in life as well as in sport. Working together, playing to each other and with each other on the village green, where the team spirit is fostered and nurtured.

The type of mind we are analysing is like a filter. It takes in the visible and the tangible in English life. It does not—because it cannot—apprehend the deeper moral and social aspects of English life. On this plane there seems to be no common connecting link or common wave-length between the English and the Central Europeans. That is why, to take one example out of scores, in "A Matter of Life and Death," Powell-Pressburger in the course of the film switch on a radio commentary; a lugubrious voice describing an English cricket match, just to show us up for our foolishness or ridiculousness, or something. Heaven knows what was in the Powell-Pressburger mind.

Heaven! Yes, that must be the starting point for our analysis of "A Matter of Life and Death," because that is the point at which the film actually starts. Freud has pointed out that the sub-conscious disguises its immoral or anti-social impulse by clothing itself with all manner of symbols or convenient alibis. The Powell-Pressburger film starts off with just this type of alibi. So that you, the simple cinema-goer, may be taken off your guard for what is to follow, in order that you may not broil up in resentment at the naked German-Nazi-Fascist philosophy which is about to be rammed down your throat, the film starts with a rambling talk of a quite irrelevant character about other worlds: millions of suns and clusters of stars which are shown on the screen as the talk talks.

The next little bit of tricky patter is the one about there being two worlds. There is the real world and "the world that exists only in the mind." Whose mind? Not your mind, or my mind, surely, because what follows in the film was conceived in the mind of Powell-Pressburger. In the minds of plain, ordinary people like you and me, if we ever think of Heaven or another world we think of it as a sort of land of heart's desire, where things are as we would like them to be. Surely, whatever happens on the screen in Powell-Pressburger's "other world" is purely the Powell-Pressburger conception. This is their own picture, their own film. Whatever happens in it is their own choice, since they themselves together wrote, directed and produced the film. It is their baby. No other mind created that "other world." No other person came between them and it. On this vital point there is no alibi.

Well, now, what is our first glimpse of this "other world" as it unfolds upon the screen? What is it like? That rigidly straight escalator avenue going on endlessly, with rigid stone statues rigidly set at rigid intervals, why, surely—no, it can't be—yes, it is. Gracious! Why, it's our old friend, the good old *Siegess Allee* along Berlin's *Tiergarten* of before the anti-Nazi war, the same *Siegess Allee* (the Victory Avenue) which was a byword the world over for its German stodge and podge and inhuman ugliness, its rigid stone statues at rigid intervals of all the alleged German heroes of the past, set along a treeless avenue as rigid as the goose-step.

And the Court-house Heaven we see later is nothing more than a mixed-up mental hotch-potch of the old Reichstag circular interior, and the later Nazi Party Rally exterior circus at Nuremberg. So this is Heaven! Is this how Powell-Pressburger would like Heaven to be, a Heaven presided over by a Brunhilda type goddess straight from Wagner's *Nibelungen Saga*, who rules over and commands a dead slave population in exactly the same way as Hitler ruled his slaves? And the choice thing about this population, as you see them streaming in, is that they are nearly all members of the Allied Forces, mainly British, American and Canadian.

Now let's take a look at the story of "A Matter of Life and Death."

It starts off with a picture of the Universe, with the camera panning over clusters of stars and suns and gases; the whole punctuated by facetious commentary. The Earth comes into focus, and on the Earth we see a spot of red, which the commentator tells us is a raided German town in flames. One of our planes, in very bad shape, is on its way home, and while over the sea, the pilot, the last surviving member of the crew, manages to get into radio communication with an American girl of the Women's Auxiliary Corps. He is in the last stages of exhaustion. The plane is riddled and on fire. His men—those who are not dead—had previously baled out. He explains all this to the girl and tells her his parachute has gone, but that he will jump. There is no alternative. "It is better to jump than to fry." He wants to know more about the girl. Where does she come from? Boston, U.S.A. He falls in love with her from hearing her voice. Where is she stationed? She tells him. He will visit her, he promises, or his ghost will.

The pilot (played by David Niven) jumps, and falls into the sea, and we see him being tossed about by the waves before he is washed up on the beach. As he regains consciousness, and thinking himself dead, he asks dazedly, "Where do I report?" The picture that confronts our pilot on the beach is deliberately devised by Powell-Pressburger as a kind of next world Arcadia as the Ancient Greeks imagined it. A stark-naked little boy seated on a rock, looking like the god Pan and playing on a lute. Around him numerous he-goats

and nanny-goats gambolling to complete the Grecian setting. However, this is not the "next world," but this world, although no-one in this world has ever seen so large a collection of he-goats and nanny-goats gathered together and doing nothing in particular on an English beach before. However!

Our pilot asks the little boy his whereabouts. The boy tells him that they are not far off from the aerodrome. There, says the boy, pointing into the distance, is a girl cycling past who works at the aerodrome. The pilot runs quite a distance along the sandy beach to intercept the girl on the cycle. They meet, and there is a love scene. He recognises her as the girl who had taken his message from the burning plane.

The girl later meets Dr. Reeves and tells him about the pilot's mental condition, and Dr. Reeves takes him in for observation. It appears that the pilot is suffering from a delusion that he is being trailed by someone called "A Heavenly Messenger," and he has asked this messenger, who has a heavenly number, to appeal to Heaven for his life. He, the pilot, should have been dead, but the Heavenly Messenger was not smart enough to take him up, because he missed our pilot in the ten-tenths "English fog." This appeal is allowed, while at the same time there is a touch-and-go operation on the pilot's brain on earth. The Messenger takes our pilot to Heaven while the operation is proceeding. There the pilot, who, you must remember, is an Englishman, is introduced to the Court—which is like the Nazi People's Court—by the Messenger, who, you must bear in mind, is a Frenchman, possibly Viehy, possibly Resistance. His outlook is not made too explicit, but he is certainly represented as a French aristocrat at the time of the Revolution who "lost his head." (Pleasantly indicated by a delicate gesture of a pointed finger across the throat.)

Our pilot, Squadron-Leader Peter Carter, appears for trial. The counsel for the prosecution who is selected (nobody knows by whom) is one Abrahiam Farlan, from Boston, the first American to be killed by an English bullet in the American War of Independence. Pleasant portent of a fair trial! Especially when we are openly told that he "hates the guts" of the English!

Squadron-Leader Peter Carter is worried about this counsel for the prosecution, but he has no need to worry for long, because Dr. Reeves, who is his friend on earth, dies in an accident and thus becomes Carter's heavenly counsel for the defence, and as the defendant is the defendant of an Englishman, the English name and the British nation, and the one who is defending is played by Roger Livesy, the Colonel Blimp in the previous "Life and Death" by Powell-Pressburger, you may depend on it that our defending counsel is a weak-kneed, knoeck-kneed ninny, whose pitious pleading

is no match for foaming-at-the-mouth Farlan, who points the accusing finger.

Scene: a large amphitheatre. In one section, the Pilgrim Fathers, all dressed alike. In another, nurses, all dressed-alike. In another, A.T.S. girls, all dressed alike. Other groups, all dressed alike. All raise their hands and eyes or lower them all together, all alike. Perfect Nazi Paradise. And what is the charge against the Englishman? It is made on behalf of "The Department of Records" (how like Himmler's Department!), and it reads that: "Having been due to die on May 2nd, 1945, at 10 of the clock, he did not . . ." Then the "trial" proceeds with a packed jury, who are both jury and witnesses for the prosecution, under the guidance of the prosecuting counsel, foaming-at-the-mouth Farlan, played by Raymond Massey.

At this point, let us try to get to the bottom of it. What is at the root of this messy mass of meandering muddle? It can only be understood in the light of the workings of the subconscious. Bearing in mind that the sub-conscious is constantly in the habit of resorting to alibis and disguises, and remembering that the chief character in this film is an Englishman who is accused as if he were the nation, it is as clear as day that the film is the story of the recent war against the Nazis *as seen through the pro-Nazi mind*.

Listen, first, to the charge. The accused, "having been due to die on May 2nd, 1945, at 10 of the clock, he did not." Here the disguise is transparent. It was in May, 1940—not 1945—that Hitler launched his treacherous attack through the Netherlands and Belgium, and in the eyes of the Germans to this day, and equally in the eyes of pro-Nazis of any nationality, no crime could have been greater than to have been "due to die" as Britain seemed to be in those dark days, and yet to have decided to fight it out and live. Britain is symbolised in the film in the person of Squadron-Leader Carter. Like Britain in the summer of 1940, there is the pilot—alone. Like Britain in 1940—alone, with her Allies defeated and over-run, Carter finds himself alone and exhausted, with all his companions gone—baled out or killed. Like Britain "due to die," Carter takes the jump and survives on the beach, as Britain survived on the beaches of Dunkirk. Just as Marshal Petain sought the rôle of go-between between Britain and Germany, after his ignominious surrender to Hitler, so the go-between between England and Hitler's Valhalla in the film is the Frenchman, the fop, the aristocrat of a decadent France, who "lost his head," the Heavenly Messenger. In 1940, the Heavenly Messenger—Petain France—sought to lead Britain into defeat and death in the arms of Hitler, but like the Heavenly Messenger in the film, Petain France lost her way and missed her chance because of the peculiar English climate, "the English fog," which the Powell-Pressburgers can neither penetrate nor remotely understand. That impenetrable climate, so incomprehensible to so

many, was the elimate of the British spirit and heart expressed through the broadcast voicee of Churchill hurling defiance at the filth which was Nazidom: "We shall fight . . . We shall never surrender."

Britain in 1940, alone, with almost every hope gone, yet had one remote ray streaming across the ether—the voicee of America, the voice of Roosevelt, to hearten us and to sustain us with hope and future help. Squadron-Leader Carter is placed in preeisely the same position in the Powell-Pressburger subeonseious. It is the voice of Ameriea symbolised through an American girl's sweet and eneouraging voicee, whieh seems to Carter the only and last link between life and death. It is in an American military hospital that Carter regains his strength, just as Britain regained her strength with the American "tools to finish the job," and at the very end of the film, camouflaged with some hocus-poeus about a girl's tear falling on a rose, Carter's future is made seeure by marrying the American girl.

In the years before the cinema came into existence, it used to be said that poets are the legislators of the world. The film makers have now taken the place of the poets, and Messrs. Emerie Pressburger and Michael Powell have taken it upon themselves to legislate for us. Britain, from now on, is to live only by kind permission of America. Powell-Pressburger have decided it, arranged for it, and are propagating it in a sub-conscious camouflaged form. There is only one way out for Britain: to swallow all the anti-British snash—and like it; eat humble pie, and marry the boss's daughter, the American girl. And although, in parts of the film, there is praise for America (and praise from Powell-Pressburger is nearly always flat, insineere and hollow), these film makers cannot resist a spot of anti-American snash as well, in other parts of the film, as when the radio is turned on in "satire," and an Ameriean voice is heard singing "Shu-shu, baby."

But there is very much more in this film than meets the eye or the ear. From the opening shots of the Universe to the last phrase in the film—"The rights of the unecommon man must always be respected"—this picture goes through the whole gamut of Sadism. Every seetion, every fragment of it, is part of a mosaie which adds up to that unmistakable complex that betrays the anti-soeial or pro-Nazi mentality. People of this east of mind always display the same symptoms, although the symptoms vary in appearance and order of arrangement as between one playwright or film maker and another. For instanee, nobody would accuse George Bernard Shaw and Michael Powell of working in collusion, nor could anyone say that there was ever a direct interchange of ideas between them when Bernard Shaw wrote "Cæsar and Cleopatra," or when Michael Powell, with his buddy, Pressburger, made himself responsible for "A Matter of Life and Death."

Yet the idea of the Universe, the vast, impersonal and therefore (to the Sadist mind) the cruel Universe with which Powell-Pressburger open their film, corresponds exactly to the notion that Bernard Shaw puts forward in his preface to "Cæsar and Cleopatra," the notion of "cosmism," which he tells us, is so much superior to Christianity (see *Bernard Shaw Among the Innocents*). In this preface Shaw derides Christianity, directly and categorically, just as Powell-Pressburger denigrate Canterbury by implication in their "Canterbury Tale," and abuse Christian England in "A Matter of Life and Death." The latter film ends with an expression of concern for "the uncommon man," but as for the common man, the many, the rabble—well, Hitler's Valhalla is good enough for them. This, again, corresponds to the Nazi notion of the *Herrenvolk* and the slave folk, to Shaw's belittling of the "ordinary man" (see passage on Darwin in Shaw's *Back to Methuselah* preface), his "Man and Superman," and to his "Cæsar and Cleopatra," where, among scores of similar Sadistic expressions there occurs this: "Let them die, they are only soldiers." As to the belittling of Britain, anyone can see there is not much to choose between Bernard Shaw and Powell-Pressburger, though Shaw has always managed to sugar-coat his spleen with a so-called joke. In "Cæsar and Cleopatra" there are scores of references to cutting off of heads. In "A Matter of Life and Death," the Heavenly Messenger, who goes in and out of the picture, is one who "lost his head" in the French Revolution. In Shaw's film, the Queen speaks with relish of burning people in an oven and about whipping slaves to death. In the Powell-Pressburger film, the dead bodies in a burning plane and "It is better to jump than fry." Deep down in their heart of hearts, Powell-Pressburger know what the fate of the British people would have been if, at the moment of decision in 1940, they had calmly awaited the incinerators of Belsen. And knowing this, Powell-Pressburger still show not the slightest concern. If it *had* happened, it would have been as much as we deserved, because our plumbing is not very good and our weather, of course, is dreadful! Incredible, you say. It is, but its in the film, just the same.

A few more symptoms from the Powell-Pressburger film. Squadron-Leader Carter recites a well-known poem and then says: "I would rather have written that than flown through Hitler's legs." What an extraordinary idea! But how to explain it? Well, how do you explain this? Visitors who went round one of the Hitler concentration camps, after it had been occupied by our Forces, noticed that above the entrance to the incinerating chamber, where masses of dead human bodies had been cremated, there was a painted picture of a headless S.S. man in uniform, seated astride a pig. Here we have an important clue to an understanding of the Sadist complex. It is clear that headlessness, legs astride (to fly through Hitler's legs) and piggishness (or boorishness) have a close and deep connection with the burning of human bodies (the burning of the

dead airmen in Powell-Pressburger's plane). In the film there are references to heads feeling queer, to operations on the brain, discussions on arachnoid adhesions, and an actual showing to the public of a brain operation and of blood clots covering the whole screen. As we well know, the Nazis were very fond of watching operations on human guinea-pigs and of encouraging the perpetration of torture. The reasons they gave were the advancement of medicine, but the true reasons were to satisfy the depraved pleasures of the Sadist. Now, in the Powell-Pressburger film, June, the American girl who is in love with Carter, is shown as looking on through a window at the operation on Carter's brain. In no civilised country in the world is a lay person ever allowed to watch an operation in a hospital. Only the people immediately concerned, the surgeons and the nurses, are allowed round the operating table, and only medical students are allowed to watch what is going on.

On the other hand, in Nazi Germany things were different. There, glass windows were specially provided to the gassing chambers so that spectators might enjoy what was going on within, and an orchestra gave forth suitable musical accompaniment. That operation watching incident in "A Matter of Life and Death" never did, or could, happen in Britain or America. It does happen in the film. You can draw your own conclusions.

The German word for Heaven is *Himmel*. The man who sent people to Heaven in Nazi Germany was the Gestapo chief Himmler. Himmler had the record of every man, woman and child carefully ticketed and docketed in the Gestapo files. No one was exempt from his scrutiny, and nobody, not even the all-highest Hitler, could avoid the possible chance of blackmail that those files afforded. Is it, a coincidence, then, that the Heavenly Messenger in the film works under the direction of the Heavenly Department of Records?

Both Dr. Goebbels, head of the Nazi Ministry of Propaganda, and Hitler himself, based their activities on the notion promulgated in *Mein Kampf*—that the bigger the lie, the easier it will be accepted by the multitude. In the Powell-Pressburger film there occurs this passage: "We must help him to win his case. We'll invent the greatest lie in medical history."

Hitler had no children and wanted none. This is quite understandable, because love, in the true sense, tenderness and affection, and the parental instincts that arise therefrom, all have as their end purpose the bringing forth of children, the creation of new life. Hitler was not interested in life, new or old. He was interested in death. He liked it, enjoyed the sight of others suffering it, and planned to spread it as far and wide as possible. Hitler married, not as we all do, as a prelude to life, but as a way into death. He married Eva Braun, not to live with her, but to die with her. A case of love at last sight! They loved—and they were in Heaven, and in

Heaven they found their love. In the Powell-Pressburger film occur the following passages:

- “What is love? The feeling of the moment.”
- “What a night for love” (said by the Heavenly Messenger).
- “The love of the moment. Do you call it love?”
- “Nothing is stronger than love on earth.”
- “Love is Heaven, and Heaven is love.”

Please notice the complete absence of any understanding of the nature of love between the sexes, the utter oblivion that love has a true and worthy end purpose—the continuation of the race—that it is not an end in itself. Later in this book we shall touch upon a work written by Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx's collaborator, entitled *The Origin of the Family*. In that work we see the same oblivion as to the nature of sex love and the family that we observe among the Powell-Pressburgers and the followers of the Sadist cults. Was this lack due to Engels having been a Socialist, or was it because his mental allegiances were fundamentally German, or Central European? Here we can only give you some facts to go upon; the rest you must work out yourself.

The obsession with Gestapo systems of records is shown in Powell-Pressburger's Heaven. The girl clerk sitting at a desk in a room full of gadgets. Phrases occur such as these:

- “Sign here.”
- “I wonder where I report.”
- “Regulations are made to be broken.”
- “I'm sorry if I broke the rules.”

But one of the most common of the symptoms in the Sadist complex is the obsession with the time concept. Time and space, but mainly time. Later, in our examination of the Warner Bros. “Dark Victory,” and the M.G.M. film, “The Picture of Dorian Gray,” we shall show how large a part this time obsession plays in the Sadist mentality. In one Nazi phrase alone, the whole “philosophy” is summed up: *Morgen die ganze Welt* [Tomorrow (time) the whole world (space)]. Nothing less than the *whole* world. Not just a share of it with others, because the Sadist disowns others. Never heard of 'em. Not, half a loaf is better than none, but the whole bakehouse. That is why the Shavians speak of “cosmism,” and the Powell-Pressburgers will have nothing less than the Universe to kick off with. The time complex is revealed in the following during the course of the film:

- The ticking of a clock as Carter jumps from his burning plane.
- “We are talking in space, not in time.”
- “Time's winged chariot”—Marvell's poem recited by Carter.
- “Your time was up.”

"Give me time, fifty years will do."

"Three days to prepare your case."

"There is no need to dispense with time."

The Nazi phoney notion of race purity is also propagated in "A Matter of Life and Death," in a disguised form, when Abraham Farlan, the Heavenly American accuser, is most indignant that "a girl of good American stock" should marry an Englishman and conform to inferior English standards of plumbing, etc., etc. Then this accuser rants on about America being the only place in the world where man is full grown, altogether forgetting that Mother England is the mother of America, that despite our differences and occasional disputes, the true base of American law, American customs and American culture and notions of freedom are Anglo-Saxon, and that the language of America is the language of the people who fought King John for Magna Carta and who sent forth the first American colonisers, from Plymouth Rock—the early Pilgrim Fathers. The real idea behind Powell-Pressburger's gag in the film: "American babies suck in freedom with their mother's milk," is to indicate that by contrast the English are the inferiors, and since Powell-Pressburger dare not come out openly to proclaim the Germans as the *Herrenvolk*, they find the Americans a convenient sub-conscious substitute as the *Herrenvolk*.

From all the foregoing it is clear that as the British film industry is constituted there is only one way to get on as a film maker. Taunt the country, the country that feeds you (for example, through the Quota Act). Mock the country that held the fort for freedom and protected you. Be anti-social, paradoxical and contrary, spread Nazi ideas, thinly disguised, to poison the minds of millions and the screen is yours. Do everything in reverse, as in "Blimp," "Fanny," "49th Parallel," "The Man in Grey," etc., etc., *ad lib, ad nauseum, ad infinitum*. Flout the conventions. Stamp on people's feelings. Encourage our enemies. Kick your friends. Paint a world in which the crook prospers and the good man suffers, and in which women, instead of being respected, are treated as cattle.

Yes, but do not expect cinema patrons overseas to nurse any respect for us, or our films, when we permit that kind of outlook on life to contaminate our output. Things have come to such a pass that no one seems prepared to shoulder responsibility for the moral delinquency of the present British film; not the British Board of Film Censors, nor the Public Morality Council, nor the British Council, nor the Foreign Office for whom good relations with other nations is of the first concern.

For one reason or another, one British film after another finds itself in hot water, the moment it enters America. "In Which We Serve" is nearly stopped for using swear words. The same happens to "Henry V," the makers having forgotten that what suited an Elizabethan audience is not necessarily meat for us in our day and

generation. Trouble with "Blimp." Trouble with "Fanny." And in our own country trouble with the military authorities over "Waterloo Road," which is banned for the troops.

In contrast to the American film, "Since You Went Away," which showed the home front at work, and men and women doing their social duty, "Waterloo Road" shows us that desertion from the Army pays, that crime pays, that civilian stealing of soldiers' wives is a commendable pastime, that a soldier may throw over his obligations, and desert in order to settle his own marital affairs, that British doctors may be "bought" to issue phoney certificates, that not only British but Canadian soldiers desert, and that British civilians may dodge service by escaping through lavatory back doors.

And if "Waterloo Road" was banned for the troops, why was it passed for civilian consumption? Why was it made at all? What good does it do? How does it elevate, or exhilarate, or entertain, or inspire? How can you ever hope to sell a thing like this abroad? Who passed the script? Who are the British Board of Film Censors, and what, if any, is its code of judgment?

CHAPTER NINE

WELL, SAYS SOMEONE, with a shrug of the shoulders, our films cannot *all* be as bad as that. What about the Technicolor "Henry V"? Surely—Shakespeare! Surely this will establish and confirm our national prestige abroad. Let's see.

Where this Two Cities production has stuck close to Shakespeare's text you cannot regard it as more than a photographed sound track or word track, for the beauty of Shakespeare lies in his imaginative *verbal* exposition, or, as his contemporaries would describe it, "figuring forth." His language was the Technicolor of the sixteenth century and the attempt to Technicolorise Shakespeare is, indeed, gilding the lily—a process both redundant and anachronistic.

But even the work of our greatest national poet and playwright cannot be handled by our anti-social, anti-religious, paradox-mongering film makers without smearing religion with a tar brush. What does the Hays code say about the way religion should be treated?

RELIGION

1. No film or episode may throw ridicule on any religious faith.
2. Ministers of religion, in their character as such, should not be used as comic characters or as villains.
3. Ceremonies of any definite religion should be carefully and respectfully handled.

Close on half-a-million pounds is spent with the utmost lavishness. Artists, decorators, painters, historians and costumiers are employed to give the film colour, shape and historical authenticity. Readers in literature are presumably employed in reading Shakespeare's text so that the play might be suitably transcribed for action in film. Presumably, but by what process of reading or reasoning could those expensive transcribers have gathered from Shakespeare's text that the Bishop of Ely should be a scruffy-looking tramp, dressed like Grock the Clown, and that he, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, should, between them, deliver their lines, clowning and fidgeting and grimacing, and dropping things all over the place, as if they were acting for a children's pantomime?

Take any of the lines at random, anywhere, and see if you can find the slightest justification for comic "business."

For instance:

CANTERBURY: The king is full of grace and fair regard.

ELY: And a true lover of the Holy Church.

Or later:

ELY: The strawberry grows underneath the nettle;
And wholesome berries thrive and ripen best
Neighoured by fruit of baser quality:
And so the Prince obscured his contemplation
Under the veil of wildness; which, no doubt,
Grew like the summer grass, fastest by night,
Unseen, yet crescive in his faculty.

CANTERBURY: It must be so; for miracles are ceased; and therefore we must needs admit the means
How things are perfected.

Or is there anything grotesquely funny in the following?

ELY: Awake remembrance of these valiant dead,
And with your puissant arm renew their seats;
You are their heir, you sit upon their throne;
The blood and courage, that renowned them,
Runs in your veins; . . .

Or in this?

CANTERBURY: Therefore doth Heaven divide
The state of man in diverse functions.
Setting endeavour in continual motion;
To which is fixed as an aim or butt,
Obedience: for so work the honey bees,
Creatures, that, by a rule in nature, teach
The act of order to a peopled kingdom . . .

Not only is there this gratuitous insult to the Church, this turning of Ministers of religion into comic characters, which is expressly forbidden under the Hays code, but the lack of grace and taste obtrudes itself a little later on in the film in another connection. Everyone remembers those famous lines in the play: "Once more into the breach, dear friends," lines that breathes the very spirit of English valour, strength and fortitude. What must our clod-hopping film makers do but to play that scene and then throw it all away by making a comic mockery of it through the mouths of Bardolph and Pistol. Yes, we know, that as far as the actual word for word text is concerned, it is true that the last line of Henry's call to action, finishing:

"Cry—God for Harry! England! and Saint George!" is followed immediately by Scene two, in which Nym, Bardolph, Pistol and boy offer us a comic interlude, but what senselessness to think that because it reads thus and thus in the book, it has to be made exactly thus and thus slavishly for a film.

Shakespeare wrote this play for a "cockpit" theatre open to the skies. Being a good theatre man, a supreme observer of human nature and character, a good psychologist and business man, Shakespeare would know that his audience, sitting or standing in physical discomfort and having their attention held at a high pitch of tension, would require a physical let-up after the heroic episode had finished. We know from theatre practice that has survived to this day, that action has to be broken up at intervals, when the curtain goes down to give the actors and audience a rest and when, from both sides of the footlights a few will repair to the bar for a drink. In Shakespeare's time, we can imagine orange-sellers offering their wares to a noisy crowd in a holiday mood. It was for such an interval that Shakespeare wrote that Bardolph-Pistol interlude. It is what has come to be known in theatre parlance as "comic relief."

But to transfer this typical theatre convention on to the screen is both depressing and demoralising. Here is no welcome interval at which one can relax and eat an orange, and banter with one's neighbour while listening to Pistol's banter on the stage. With the speed of light, we flash from the very heights of inspiration at Henry's call to battle, to the very depths of desolation and mockery of everything that went before, all in a twinkling. The glorious heroism of one moment is derided the next, and the effect is one of frustration and depression.

Shakespeare and Shaw seem to have been chosen deliberately as the easy way, the shortest cut to fortune. What could be more of a sure-fire certainty than Shakespeare? Who is more famous than Shaw? Take the writings of these two holus-bolus, just as they are, put them into film and you are all set to draw large sums at the pay box through the sheer publicity value of the authors' names alone. Look at the trouble you save!

Shakespeare and Shaw will prove, however, that the short cut is the longest way round after all. After "Henry V" has gone the round of the cinemas, what then? What follows? Our film makers are back exactly where they were before, still under the obligation of learning the essence of film scripting.

Shakespeare has been a source of inspiration to authors and playwrights for nearly four centuries, but authors and playwrights, however skilful, are handicapped to the extent that they have to present a picture of the world *in words*. The artist-worker in words *describes* the world. The film maker literally places "the world before your eyes," as the old showmen used to have it.

The artist-worker in words, on the one hand, and the film maker on the other, appeal—or should appeal—to two different wavelengths in the human consciousness. To paraphrase a well-known couplet:

Words are to a film but things apart,
They are a novel's whole existence.

The natural cycle in radio broadcasting is not complete until the station and the receiver are tuned in to each other *on the same wavelength*. A broadcast on short waves is wasted on a long wave receiver, and *vice versa*. A writer, because of the very limitations of his medium, has to use that medium with the utmost stress and colour and emphasis. For instance, a writer wishing to convey a certain picture to your mind, might put the following down on paper:

"A fiery steed with flowing mane."

The film maker who knows his business, would, with the same intent, place that type of horse in front of a movie camera and press a button. He would not attempt to describe the horse in words, but in motion picture. In "Henry V" you get the form of Shakespeare's imagery in words followed by an underlined pictorial emphasis of what those words describe. Which is as if a schoolmaster were to put COW on the blackboard and then paint a picture of the animal above it so that you should make no mistake as to what those letters stand for.

It may be said with truth that the very discomforts and inadequacies of the Elizabethan theatre auditorium almost impelled Shakespeare to seek ways of endowing his lines with such great power as to avert the attention of the audience from their physical discomforts, and to rivet it upon the play in progress.

In the course of centuries, language alters very considerably. It is nearly certain that the language of Shakespeare, which needs quite an effort of mind to absorb today, was the common ordinary language of the people and easily understandable by his patrons, otherwise Shakespeare could not have lived by his plays. Shakespeare himself, in his own words, in the very opening lines of "Henry V," explains his purpose and what he expects his audience to do. In line after line he exhorts his audience to do what the cinema audience, 360 years later, is saved the trouble of doing. For instance:

Suppose within the girdle of these walls are now confined two mighty monarchies.

Suppose. But today the power of the ciné-camera brings the world in front of you upon the screen without need of supposing. And further:

Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts.

In this we see both the greatness and humility of Shakespeare. "Our imperfections" he calls his work, which he expects you to implement with your thoughts. And again:

Think, when we talk of horses

That you see them

Printing their proud hoofs i'

The receiving earth.

Think. But today you do not have to conjure up horses in your

The World Is My Cinema

mind at the spoken behest of 'an actor. You see real, not imaginary, horses, and you see them not only printing their hoofs into the receiving earth; you hear them galloping and neighing as they gallop. The lines continue:

For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,
Carry them here and there:
Jumping o'er times,

Turning the accomplishment of many years into an hour glass. Yes, the film does all that, "jumping o'er times" in as many flashes upon the screen and bringing the accomplishment of years into an hour glass. But lest there are some who think that this is an argument against the use of imagination, it must be said at once that the screen is insistent in its demand for imaginative treatment, but it is a different kind of imagination and inventiveness from that required in other forms of presentation.

In the making of films—filmic imagination. In the writing of a novel or a play you need literary or verbal imagination, a "figuring forth" by means of words. Even if "Henry V" had been made without those gaucheries and lack of respect for religious feelings, it would still remain a monument to those who imagine that by basking in the glory of Shakespeare's name they can earn cheap laurels and prosper. The relentless problem of the right approach to film scripting remains as haunting and as pressing as ever.

The film is the dominant cultural form in our present civilisation, just as the plane is the dominant in the field of transport. In Shakespeare's day, the platform stage and the printing press were jostling for dominance. Speech, dialogue, verbal imagery, are earlier forms of idea communication in the line of evolution. Therefore it may be taken as certain that Shakespeare and film do not go easily together. It may be taken as a rule (which, like all rules may only be broken very rarely and with a great deal of luck) that speech, dialogue and verbal imagery, whether Shakespeare's or any other playwright's, may only be used sparingly in the film medium. They may only be employed to fill in the gaps which a particular film is unable to span any other way.

"The film's the thing," and speech and dialogue, however beauti- ful, must form only a part, a restricted and subordinate part, to the visual and moving and active. As long as this axiom remains unheeded in British film practice, we shall get stuff like that other photographed stage play, "Cæsar and Cleopatra," which took such an unconscionable time a-making. Something might be said in defence of "Henry V" as leading to a mass acquaintance with our leading national poet, but what earthly cultural value can there be in a balloon barrage of Shavian fireworks costing one million five hundred thousand pounds?

Our film makers are having a good time with the playwrights, but they'll learn some day—the hard way. They will be called upon to make films that are films or make way for those who can.

CHAPTER TEN

TWO MAIN STREAMS MAY BE NOTED in present day British film production. One is addicted to the habit of presenting life against a material background which is utterly deficient in appeal, and is redolent of parsimony, niggardliness and miserliness. The other, more under Italian and French influence, is linked to an extravagant, pompous lavishness, which has little to do with our native habits of mind, and certainly nothing in common with the lavishness in American films where money is spent, in the main, for good purpose and sound commercial reasons. "Millions Like Us," "Demi-Paradise" and "Salute John Citizen" are fairly representative of the films in the meanness category, while "Henry V." and "Cæsar and Cleopatra" belong to the other extreme, where free-handedness reaches a fantastic new high. Neither of these tendencies afford the slightest hope for laying the basis of a world film industry.

It may be true that, as a nation, we are rather inclined to the habit of making a little go a long way; that we prefer the unostentatious to the lavish, the simple to the complex. These habits are sound enough in private life, except when they are carried to extremes. But when we think of the film, we must always bear in mind that in it the nation's house, with its inhabitants, is being displayed for all the world's people to look into. If, therefore, we wish to hold our own in the esteem of others, we shall have to strike an even balance between parsimony and extravagance in our moving pictures.

Yet it is the paucity of background, the uninspired dead-level cheapness, which is so often praised by our native professional critics, these same film experts who take every opportunity of sneering at "sentiment," at "mother love," and at "boy meets girl," and at the very elements which sustain the human spirit. These same judges sought to elevate the dingy, poverty-stricken, doddering and dithering "Salute John Citizen" as being "Britain's reply" to the American made "Mrs. Miniver."

"Mrs. Miniver," of course, crammed the world's cinemas, while "Britain's reply" hardly attracted a flicker of attention except among the brilliant critics. The latter objected (as they nearly always do of most American films) to the sense of prosperity in "Mrs. Miniver," its graciousness, its tact, its supreme humanism.

its quiet courage. The family unities in "Mrs. Miniver" were strongly upheld and emphasised in the story, whereas there is nothing the critics love better than to see the family ties disrupted and laid in the dust, as in Orson Welles' "The Magnificent Ambersons." (Note the satirical "Magnificent" in the title.)

If our critics had had their way, if the national consciousness had been of the character that they admire, if the general public had taken the advice of current-fashion film criticism and gone to see "The Magnificent Ambersons" and Orson Welles' previous "Citizen Kane" instead of ignoring the critics' advice and staying away, if the public had followed the line of social and family disruption instead of social and family cohesion, the line of "Mrs. Miniver," this nation would certainly have been ripe, suitably atomised, for the Hun to take possession.

Now, there is a frame of mind that cannot quite grasp our national habit of reserve, our dislike of ostentation. It is this inability to understand us which is responsible for caricaturing the national character in films like "Demi-Paradise." In times of national crisis, certain of our virtues come to the fore which the ill-informed think it right to satirise. Historians, for instance, have been known to take Queen Elizabeth to task for her alleged parsimony, forgetting that the enforced economy of her resources was one of the means by which Elizabeth laid the foundations upon which modern Britain stands. That sense of economy has been, before Elizabeth and since, a conscious and necessary part in the development of the Englishman's evolutionary character. The ability to economise at a time of need, to grin and bear it, to take it on the chin, to keep going forward in face of stringency and danger, is part and parcel of the historically developed English character. Co-related to this fundamental attitude of mind so incomprehensible to our European neighbours, there is a humility, an unostentatiousness, almost self-abasement, which, however admirable it may be in private life, has in the long run a bad effect upon our relations with other countries. This effect upon others is aggravated when we are pictured in films like "Demi-Paradise." Such films not only produce a derogatory effect upon our body politic, but with continued and repeated doses of the alleged "satire" message these pictures convey, things and people tend to become purely flat in appearance—featureless, like worn pennies upon which you can discern neither the date nor the reign. It is little wonder, then, that foreign peoples are not very eager to look at our films.

But let us for a moment examine the opposite trend of lavish extravagance exemplified by the Shakespeare and Shaw films. Where are these likely to lead us? Do these films portend a fashion in the cultivation of the French, German or Italian methods of film making? Let us hope not. The French, maybe, could teach us about lavishness, but their films before 1939 seemed to exude an atmosphere that went with caviare and *pâté de foie gras*, with mink-lined

coats, courtesans, Cagoulards and Stavisky scandals. May we be spared "luxury" of this kind!

The German films, before and since Hitler, were greatly addicted to the worship of *things* rather than people. Their "lavishness" expressed itself in immense displays of varied objects, articles, treasures, possessions of all kinds, pointed at and gloated over with immense deliberation and satisfaction. The German national weakness for accumulating loot is fairly well known by now, but it was quite clearly mirrored in the German film long before the war and long before Hitler. This fixed German habit of mind may best be observed in Fritz Lang's Weimar production, notably in "*M.*" the film of the Dusseldorf child murderer, in which the bits and pieces, the scraps and scrappings of a beggar-thief's junk dump is lovingly caressed by the moving camera as it passes in a tracking shot over the collection.

The cult of sheer Gigantism, of which "*Cæsar and Cleopatra*" is the supreme expression in British films, is the same cult, the identical path that led the Italian film industry, even before 1914, to extinction. It petered out utterly with the colossal spectacle pictures of ancient Rome, "*Quo Vadis*" and "*Cabiria*." It had nothing more to say, for there is nothing bigger than biggest, if it is sheer size you are after. In America, size and spectacle films often appear. The name of Cecil B. De Mille is linked with many such productions, but these pictures have other and enduring qualities. other messages besides Gigantism to convey, or the American film industry could not have survived.

In geological times the reptilian *Diplodocus* grew to enormous size and, size only, forgetting all the other factors that make for survival. He grew to be several times the length, height and tonnage of the heaviest animal living today. *Diplodocus* disappeared. When the Egyptians started building those huge, massive, imposing Pyramids, they were making for their own extinction. True, without knowing it, without wishing it, but doing it just the same. With the Pyramids, Egypt had nothing, and could have nothing more to say.

Field-Marshal Goering went to size both in his own physical person and in his enormous personal accumulations, and he and his kind went out—just the same.

In the heyday of the Italian film there was large scale ostentation, plaster and paste board sets and an immense number of dressed-up supers playing with fantasies that dwelt on past and gone glories, and a childishly futile desire to resurrect them. We know only too well what came of all that feeding of the Italian people with the outward trappings of dead and gone glory. We remember only too well what came about five years later, to Italy; the futility, bombast and dressed-up imitation Nero in the shape of Mussolini, ruling over a plaster-and-paste-board "Imperial" realm.

The Italian industry stopped in its tracks with "*Quo Vadis*," in 1913. Thereafter it ambled and dithered along under State protec-

tion. There could be no further possibility of growth from the cult of Gigantism for its own sake any more than there could be a germ of growth or of healthy expansion from the tree of "Cæsar and Cleopatra."

When we consider how the British film industry is fostered beneath the glasshouse protection of Government support through the Quota Act, it might be profitable for us to recall how a very similar form of protection affected the Italian film industry which Mussolini attempted to keep alive under artificial respiration.

Under huge headlines, the London *Evening Standard* of April 9th, 1938, published the following:

WITHDRAWAL OF STATE SUBSIDIES FROM ITALIAN FILMS HAS CAUSED CONSTERNATION IN THE INDUSTRY

(By Our Rome Correspondent)

Culture Minister Dino Alfieri's speech before the Italian Chamber, announcing the withdrawal of State subsidies from the film industry, has had a bombshell effect. Some of the first results has been the unmuzzling of the Italian Press.

People openly express their relief at no longer being compelled to speak well of Italian films because of "patriotic duty." It is now publicly admitted that Italian film production of the past three years has been a dismal failure.

Some, however, believe that Signor Alfieri was ill-advised. For he has discouraged the big firms. on the one hand, by warning against monopolistic combines. On the other hand, he has crushed the small individual.

It is reported that production at Cine Citta is almost at a standstill. Officially, however, only one firm so far has announced suspension. This is Imperator Films. In a few days it was to have begun working on Telesio Interlandi's story, "Alta Marea." This has now been definitely shelved because the firm lacked the 500,000 lire capital required of all producers. Others who had hoped to complete their pictures on money advanced to them by the State are expected to follow Imperator's example. . . .

Most daringly outspoken among the Italian Press has been the *Popola di Roma*, which said: "The heavy cash advances and the multiform assistance granted to Italian film production with the idea of developing a commercially efficient industry, had served instead to create a network of parasitic mechanisms. It had brought into play a system of speculation that had nothing in common with the Italian cinema industry. Certain so-called producers cared little or nothing for filmically effective results. And they cared less for that which constitutes the basic and essential element in any organisation: building up the film's prestige before the public."

Surely there is little need to labour the point. Italy is not the only country whose film output has proved moribund and sterile. *Every country in Europe, including Britain, has had State protection in some form or another*, and the film product of every European country has been impotent to compete with the American cinema for world dominance.

However, where we score over other European countries is in the language and cultural partnership which we share with the United States, the only real film making country in the world. This cultural partnership offers us a hope of drawing level some day with America. But the hope will only be realised on one condition—that we set our hearts and minds and inventive ability to the task—the way we organised for Mulberry, Fido, Pluto, Radar and atomic power.

At the moment, our film chiefs are not too strongly inclined to do anything except to go the way they have been going these many years. They have been doing quite well under Quota. Why trouble to change? Why, indeed? The only change they would like to see is more Quota to keep more American films out. That, of course, will incline the Americans to fall over themselves to take *our* films for *their* market with open arms!

CHAPTER ELEVEN

SINCE LIKE CONDITIONS PRODUCE LIKE EFFECTS, the conditions of State protection of the film industry in Britain will have the effect of encouraging those whose thought processes travel in the same direction as the minds of the film makers of other State-protected industries in Italy, France, Germany and the Soviet Union.

Thus we find even Shakespeare's "Henry V" is endowed with decor, background and costume overpoweringly reminiscent of Italian Renaissance painting. The urge to make "Cæsar and Cleopatra" is likewise an expression of strong cultural allegiances towards the Italian and Roman traditions, rather than towards Anglo-Saxondom, both in the matter and in the manner of presentation. These urges and sub-conscious leanings are handicaps, not advantages. By as much as our film production is tied mentally to local, parochial, isolationist cultures, with traditions of presentation going back long before the age of the cinema, by so much will our product be prevented from becoming world product. The cinema has a tradition of its own which has been built up from its own necessities. The successful film is the one that absorbs, modifies and dominates the older cultures. The successful film is the one which is not dominated by the older forms of painting, word-poetry and drama. That is the crucial lesson we must learn, the very core of our case in this book. This argument applies equally to the less expensive films made in Britain: for example, "Demi-Paradise," which emanated some months earlier from the same studios responsible for "Henry V" and "Cæsar and Cleopatra."

"Demi-Paradise," notwithstanding its British origin, was merely a French film played in English, French in outlook, manner and sympathy, French in "satirising" (supposedly) both the British and the Russians in the well-known sceptical French manner. It is hardly surprising that such a film should appear in our midst during the war for our survival. The makers of this film were coming to it by way of their previous efforts. "Uncensored," "with a little bear behind," was one of them. "French Without Tears" was an even earlier one. These and other films with similar characteristics all pointed inexorably to the path that was to lead to "Demi-Paradise" and, later, to "Fanny By Gaslight." Among other French touches,

"Demi-Paradise" uses the technique first made popular by Saeha Guitry in "The Romance of a Cheat," of giving the audience a lot of talk, gloating over his unsavoury career of a cheat, and using the film as a kind of perambulating illustration of the talk on the sound track..

In "Demi-Paradise," a Russian, Ivan Kusnetzov (Laurence Olivier) talks about how he first came to Britain, and how he just couldn't understand the British, nor they him. Given the situation as it is later presented in the film, that is easily enough understood. The Russian is a blundering idiot and the British complacent asses. Ivan, who has invented a new ice-breaker propeller, has come here to have it put into production. Four times he introduces himself to four different people as "Ivan Kusnetzov from Nizhni Petrovsk, how do you do, I am very well thank you." He lectures his hosts as if he were a pedagogue, using the language of Socialist Sunday School primers. He behaves like this to the very people he expects will make his propeller for him, and while their guest. Like a clumsy fool, he kisses the daughter of his millionaire host and, caught thus abusing the hospitality of another man's home, he makes things worse by rationalising the whole thing off. The pity of it is that an actor of Laurence Olivier's immense talent had to be persuaded to play the part of this priggish character. Execrable as the script is, Olivier contrives to show us with what skill he could have played a real Russian, had he been given a chance. But the best actor in the world can never make a good film from a bad script.

Even had the script been better than it was, the satiric vein in which "Demi-Paradise" is conceived vitiates any message the film might have been meant to convey. Almost the only country to employ the satiric method in the cinema has been France, the France which has since had to go through the torment and humiliation of Nazi occupation. Satire is a method of expression which requires greater judgment and restraint than either the French or the British film makers have yet shown themselves to possess.

Satire may be used sparingly to give point to a character or an action, but for a film to be nothing but satire from beginning to end is a confession of lack of faith in mankind. Lack of faith, lack of the social sense—that was pre-1939 France, and that lack could easily be translated to this country by means of films like "Demi-Paradise."

Satire has to have something to ridicule. How can you ridicule a people who sustained the Battle of Britain—alone—against the whole might of the *Luftwaffe*—alone—with no Allies except those who were prostrate beneath the heel of the conqueror and those who were to come in many months later? How can you ridicule a people who believed firmly in themselves through dire, but temporary, defeats? Fighting for our lives, we accorded a privileged position to film makers to sneer at us. The people concerned with this and

other such productions have very little to be proud of.

To rear satire as a method into a total *Cosmos* is crazily wrong. The ancient satires of Juvenal and Horace played only upon the smallest aspects, the tiniest particles of contemporary social life. The Epics were then the principal culture to sustain, nourish and stimulate the people of the time. Did Homer sneer at the Greek heroes? Did Virgil? Did the Apostles sneer at Our Lord? Whoever heard of anyone deriding England during the Elizabethan era? No one mocks at the Spitfire, the men who invented it and the men who fought in it. No one mocks at the great technical and cultural heritage that Britain has so generously shared with the rest of the world. Now, however, when St. George has slain the Dragon, it is permissible for the "satirists" to yelp at his heels.

We can imagine, too, what the Russians had to say about the portrayal of a Russian as an unmannerly muddler. While "Demi-Paradise" was still being made, Mr. Maisky, then Ambassador, was obliged to protest at a scene in which the Russian was shown coming back into the millionaire's house—drunk. Some of that had to be cut, but the scene still remained in an attenuated form, in the Russian's loud singing and self-conscious gait in one of the sequences.

Mr. Maisky would have been justified in objecting to the whole characterisation of the Russian in "Demi-Paradise." For the kind of person Kuznetzov is represented to have been, does not come to Britain on State trading business without connections, wandering about the place like a lost soul. In the film, Kusnetzov always refers vaguely to "the Trade Delegation," but no one is made the wiser about the "Delegation's" power, its function or its office. Such an official, coming from the Soviet Union to London to secure the manufacture of a ship's propeller would be piloted or guided from Areos or the Russian Embassy. But this fellow arrives apparently as a free lance and blunders into offices, unheralded and unsung, with his pitiful: "I am Ivan Kusnetzov, from Nizhni-Petrovsk, how do you do, I am very well thank you."

The Russians are quite well acquainted with the use of introductions, letters, credentials and the telephone through which to make appointments, and delegates coming to this country know a good bit of English. It would appear, therefore, that the object of the producers was not to show the Russian acting sensibly, but to make him look and act foolishly, and, if they could have got away with it—drunkenly. On his first visit to this country, Kusnetzov is bewildered and antagonised by the antics of the English. They are not, apparently, serious about business: they push lawnmowers, they play the piano in shirt sleeves, and indeed they become quite Tsarist-Russian in their habits, for it was either "presently," "tomorrow," or "tea"—concepts already familiar to Ivan in the Russian "sei-chas," "zavtra" and "chai." We have often been

called a nation of shopkeepers, but this is the first time we have seen ourselves as procrastinators.

The millionaire engineer (queerly-named animal, this!) who, in his addiction to Bradshaw and a bust of Handel adorning his office, has a curious "satiric" resemblance to a well-known millionaire not unconnected with the British film industry, does at last settle down to business. It transpires that he is an expert on propellers and, after examining Ivan's blue-prints, makes various corrections. The propeller is manufactured to this millionaire "expert's" specification and is a flop. The ship upon which it was to have been fitted cannot be launched because the propeller has broken down under the strain. Which only goes to show what bone-heads these expert British millionaire propeller designers are! However, the situation is saved. Ivan, while killing time seated in a teashop, throws a bit of paper into his cup o' tea and keeps on throwing bits of paper into succeeding cups o' tea—until—inspired—like George Stephenson and his steaming kettle—a new idea in ice-breaker propellers is born! The new propeller is then made to Ivan's tea-cup inspiration and, hey presto! It works! Why all this fuss and to do has to take place in England, goodness only knows. The Russians make excellent propellers in Russia and a propeller for an ice-breaker would obviously have been made experimentally in Russia first, and tried out on one of their own ice-breakers in their own ice-bound Northern waters. But these are such prosaic matters, so much a part of life's ordinary horse-sense, and they lend themselves so little to the playboys' satire!

As we value our good name in the eyes of the world, let us turn our backs on such juvenilities. Let us seriously re-cast our ideas on films so that our country may be placed at that pre-eminence to which she is so rightly entitled. We must realise, once and for all, that every single aspect shown on film or television registers on the minds of a vast audience. As Tom Paine pointed out, people become what they contemplate, and if they contemplate dithering and nincompoopery long enough, without any compensating films of vigour and straight thinking to throw into the opposite scale, dithering and nincompoopery could easily become the order of the day in our social life.

The world audience of the near future will clamour only for those fictional films *that do something for them*, that enlarge their understanding, that show them better ways of life and of living together that bring examples of behaviour they desire to emulate. Films that will give them ideas towards reinvigorating their lives.

Vigour, strength of character, beauty, a rich material background, creative characters with an active outlook, themes that illuminate the conflicts of our day, themes that shame the bad and elevate the good. That is the way the British film must follow.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Reynolds NEWSPAPER is an old-established Sunday journal, with a long tradition of radicalism and progress. The organ of the Co-operative movement, it is strongly linked in thought and sentiment to the present Labour Government, the Government elected by the people of Britain in the hope of better times.

Taking this into account, knowing the power for good or evil the cinema possesses, having regard to the character of the British films we have described, and remembering the inevitable, organic origin of the Hays office and its function as a steady influence on the minds and the lives of the people, what do you make of the following by film critic Joan Lester in *Reynolds*, July 14th, 1946?

. . . I can recall only the rarest of minor lapses of taste in British films, and I do not think I ever remember seeing a really slyly suggestive British picture. I wish I could say the same of imported material.

That is why I regard with concern the visit to this country tomorrow of Mr. Joe Breen, of the Hays office, the Hollywood film censorship which saw fit to hold up "Fanny By Gaslight" and "The Rake's Progress."

Mr. Breen is coming to advise British producers on making films which will pass this censorship. I have expressed my criticisms of this eye-locked concern before in this column.

Are we really to have our British productions cramped and shackled by these futile standards from overseas which boggle at an honest presentation of life but wink at sugared pruriency?

Only minor lapses of taste in British films! In other words, let life and letters, law and learning die, as long as you preserve our precious brothels in "Fanny By Gaslight," our ne'er-do-wells in "The Rake's Progress," and our Sadists and Schizophrenics, pathological murderers and other sub-conscious disease mindedness, all in the sacred name of "an honest presentation of life." Dear Joan Lester, what is there "honest" in current British fictional films? It is only rarely that the characters depicted correspond to real types in British social life. If we were really all like those characters, then—and then only—would the films be entitled to be called "honest presentations." But if we were like that, then the

country would resemble a lunatic asylum, and any kind of social life or social betterment would be impossible.

If in such papers as *Reynolds* (which, to some extent, reflect Government opinion) opinions are expressed in which black is firmly stated to be white and white, black, if this is our social consciousness which allows the most bitter, anti-human, anti-social and anti-British impulses to be propagated among us, though lives were sacrificed in the war against evil, if all this has been going on for years, not only without protest, but with actual encouragement from the political Left to the political Right, then it must be obvious that this anti-social tendency cannot simply stop by itself.

A ball rolling down a hill without impediment has to keep rolling till it reaches bottom. It cannot suddenly stop in its tracks and roll upwards by itself. And just as a snowball increases in size as it travels downwards, so we notice in the British film industry that all the anti-social tendencies gather up in one huge, cumbersome, gigantic, expensive film, the last word in "magnificent" anti-sociality—the much publicised Shaw-Rank-Pascal masterpiece, "*Cæsar and Cleopatra*."

A film cannot be better or worse than the moral substance of which it is made. The material trappings of a film do not by themselves make a film, and the reason why "*Cæsar and Cleopatra*" is a bad film is because it is packed from beginning to end with anti-human attitudes and monstrous sentiments which were current during the downfall of past Empires and not during their uprise. The standpoint of this film is closer to the age of Nero than to the age of Julius Cæsar during the Roman expansion.

When, in pagan times, an Empire reached the limit of its possible expansion, when the obsession with wealth and luxury became an end in itself, and not a means to the good social life, then the worship of property values would inevitably displace a regard for human values in men's minds. In the making of "*Cæsar and Cleopatra*," the obsession with *things*, the expensive concern with costumes, trinkets, buildings and statues and other gew-gaws served almost to black out from the minds of the makers, all idea of human relationships, human social needs, and the human sentiments which should motivate the theme of a film. Theme, purpose, the human purpose of satisfying the human emotions of the millions beyond the outer walls of the film studio were hardly ever thought of in the making of "*Cæsar and Cleopatra*," as anyone can check up, not only from the film itself, but from the story of its making as given by Marjorie Deans in her book, "*The Meeting at the Sphinx*."

Constantly harping on stabbing, killing, eating, beating, throwing people to the crocodiles and cutting off of heads, the film runs its Sadistic course. The production, which is based on a Bernard Shaw play written about forty or fifty years earlier (the hey-day of the Oscar Wilde cults), is like a child's nightmare translation of Oscar Wilde's "*Salome*" and is filled with expressions of savageries that

never would, and never could, enter the mind of a normal, average human being. If there is a theme in it at all, it is a theme of contempt for whatever there is good in man and the glorifying of whatever there is evil in him. In the film, only Shaw speaks. The so-called characters—Cæsar, Cleopatra, Ftataeeta, Ruffio, Britannus, etc.—are merely differently labelled aspects of Shaw's "thought." The film has very little incident and, when it moves at all, it is in horse-play, as in the "sousing" of Cleopatra in the harbour. It has hardly any connection with normal human life. There is no love. No love of a man for a maid. No love of a man for his fellow man and neighbour, no goodness, no elevation, no family virtues—only family squabbles, as between Cleopatra and her younger brother over the succession to the Throne. No faith in the past. No hope for the future, and charity towards none.

And yet—Shaw has somehow succeeded in dazzling the eyes of the great, the powerful and the influential. His message has left its mark upon the minds of millions.

With Bernard Shaw as the leader, the fount and head of the cult of "reason," millions have been induced to lose their faith in God, which means that people believe in neither God nor man. Whether you like it or not—break the link between God and man, and you destroy the link between man and man at one and the same time. Whether you like it or not—that is how the thing works out in actual practice in the real world.

This, then, is the intellectual climate at the present moment, the temporary climate of "Cæsar and Cleopatra" as the entertainment food for the people. It is not altogether an accident that the appearance of "Cæsar and Cleopatra" corresponds to the appearance of the Labour Government elected by the people in the hope that things will be made better. But will they? Can they be made better by the present personnel of the Government, who are largely the mind-children of the Fabian Society and Bernard Shaw? If tyranny and oppression and contempt for human beings are expressed with relish in a play by Bernard Shaw, are we not justified in feeling misgivings? In this connection it is well to recall that *Reynolds* newspaper sees nothing wrong at all with British films—nothing at all. Everything in the garden is lovely, just as B.U.s and queues are good for you, presumably.

Reichs-Marshal Goering, in his hey-day, used to shout: "Guns before butter." Today we are offered words before butter. Shawian paradox before butter. Discussions before bacon. Legislation and edicts and endless forms to fill up before homes. Power for power's sake, rather than for the sake of the people. Bureaucracy before Democracy. In accordance with Bernard Shaw's philosophy, butter shall for ever remain—a word. Somewhere, in one of his essays, Shaw gives it as his opinion that only on paper has mankind found nobility and happiness. *Only on paper*. Shaw, the intellectual

spearhead of Leftism for nearly sixty years, is being taken at his word by those in power.

This is the cultural atmosphere in our country which has favoured the bringing forth upon the screen, the expression of the subconscious in the shape of "Cæsar and Cleopatra." We say the subconscious, because the conscious mind usually deals with what is, or was, and with things that are socially beneficent. The sub-conscious, as we have shown in connection with the Shaw and other films, is only dimly concerned with a true narration of events. It is usually engaged with camouflaging events and twisting them for malevolent ends. There are flagrant historical distortions in "Cæsar and Cleopatra" which Shaw excuses in his preface to the play by saying that the play came to him by "divination." No doubt Powell-Pressburger could put in a similar plea for their virulently anti-British "A Matter of Life and Death."

Be that as it may, the making of the film "Cæsar and Cleopatra" was a glorious adventure while it lasted, for the inseparable two—Bernard Shaw and Gabriel Pascal. No need to guess how they enjoyed themselves. They have told us the story themselves. For instance, Marjorie Deans tells us in her book that Shaw, looking at Vivien Leigh and Claud Rains on the paws of the Sphinx, exclaimed:

"What scope! What limitless possibilities! When I look back on my work as a young man with my colleagues in the theatre, it seems to me we were like children playing with makeshift toys. Here you have a whole world to play with."

Miss Deans (who, as well as being the author of "A Meeting at the Sphinx," was one of the script writers to Pascal's production) goes into many raptures in the course of her narrative. She says:

"Shaw . . . wasn't interested in having his plays turned into films by a remote, uncontrollable process happening thousands of miles away in California."

In other words, he, Shaw, wanted to play with these great, big new toys himself! So, in Gabriel Pascal he found the perfect playmate! In a "Credo" (*sic*) prefacing Miss Deans book, Pascal writes that he, Pascal, believes in miracles.

He continues:

"When I met him (Shaw) we felt instantly that we shared a belief in both kinds of miracles and that he knew the secret of the Pied Piper—how to induce genuine children to run away from the boring mediocrities of everyday life. So, G.B.S. entrusted me with the magic flute of his art which he knew I could play."

This emphasis by both Shaw and Pascal on children and on playing like children is significant and quite remarkable. The partnership between them seems to have resulted in a sort of pantomime horse, with Shaw as the head and Pascal as the rear end, but whatever its antics, this horse is never really alive. It could never repeat the success it achieved with "Pygmalion," not in as many

years as "Cæsar and Cleopatra" cost in pounds sterling.

Of course, Paseal dignifies his activities by calling them "a spiritual mission." He says: "I was concerned with the unique task of giving evidence to posterity through my picture of the immortality of the genius of G. B. Shaw." Where the public comes in, in all this, is not mentioned.

Now take a closer look at Mr. Paseal himself. Writing under the heading of "The Hobo Producer," a title clearly of Paseal's choosing, David Lewis says in *Everybody's Weekly*:

"He is a rootless man. Born in Hungary, schooled in a Jesuit seminary, he studied agriculture in Berlin, acting in Vienna, blundered into film making in Denmark, produced, acted, exhibited his own film in Italy, found failure in America, success in Britain."

And having made a mess of it in every other country, observe how Paseal, in his own words, expresses his warm thanks for favours received. In a moment we shall see. Mr. Lewis quotes Mr. Paseal further as saying:

"I was the biggest flop ever to go to Hollywood. I never made a single film there. I trudged from lot to lot, looking for work and broke to the wide. When I did get a chance, it came to nothing, because I quarrelled with the Hollywood executives. In the end, I became a tramp, and they called me the Hobo producer. . . . I am still the Hobo producer, and no one will ever make me into a steady citizen. I have a caravan always ready for use and when I get fed up I just drive off in it and forget about everything."

The habit of the Hobo is difficult to break, even under affluent circumstances! But to boast about it! To tell the world that he, Paseal, a two-legged specimen of *homo sapiens*, behaves according to his reflexes, stimulated by past memory traces like any migrating bird on the wing or beast in the field! Mr. Lewis then gives us his own impression of Paseal, thus:

"He is a creature of vast volcanic rages, abject depressions, soaring enthusiasms and long vision, and he retains in a highly unstable combustion unlimited will to power and philosophic pity for the tragedies and follies of mankind."

Where Mr. Paseal's "philosophic pity" comes in, or where it has ever manifested itself, is difficult to see, but we do see that right in the middle of the anti-Nazi war, while the nation was spending its strength and its youth to destroy "the unlimited will to power" in a Hitler, another "will to power" mercilant was being set up in business in our very midst, to dispense his anti-social ideas among us broadcast.

Everything that was connected with Paseal's film was unlimited and superhuman, just as it was in Hitler's empire. Even Hitler's famous "intuition" is reproduced in the mental processes of our friend "Gabby," as he was called in satiric affection in the studios.

In *The Picture Post*, December 15th, 1945, he is quoted as saying:

"Every human and inanimate detail I have made my own responsibility. Even the meanest extra must be just right. For sixteen hours a day I work to inspire myself. I cannot produce . . . in the orthodox manner. Everything must be inspiration. If people say my methods are extravagant, I say it is the only way I can obtain results. No one should put his money on me if he expects ordinary film methods."

Nothing that ever existed was ever quite good enough for Gabby's profoundly inspirational purposes. Not even the authentic Sphinx. He had to take his own intuitive Sphinx to Egypt on location. In one scene he had the Egyptian Army supplying 1,500 men to help him stage the battle scenes. He had 2,000 costumes specially made. He had to have 500 pieces of jewellery collected. His Egyptian gods were specially cast to a height of 22 feet and weighed 25 cwt. each. He would spend days altering a red carpet while precious sun-lit days were passing with never a camera turning. Limitless time and money was spent to ascertain the exact position of the stars in the sky at the exact hour of that night in 48 B.C. when Cæsar was supposed to have sat talking to Cleopatra on the paws of the Sphinx, though the visible results on the screen would hardly affect the result at the pay-box by as much as a single Hungarian pengoe. Even Shaw, during the course of the film's making, exclaimed:

"He shocks me by his utter indifference to the cost, but the result justifies him."

If you can shock Shaw, you have certainly done something! Shaw asserts in Miss Dean's book that Pascal is an extraordinary man who turns up once in a century. But if Shaw had had some idea of the history of the cinema he might have recalled that one Eric Von Stroheim; a person whose early years were spent under the influence of a "Kolossal" Austro-Hungarian Empire in the last stages of decay, had exercised the same "Kolossal" ideas on film making, twenty years earlier, in Hollywood, the same useless extravagance, the same paradoxes, the same flinging about of other people's money indulged in by Hungarian Gabby. After Stroheim had made the expensive but financially disastrous and appropriately titled film, "Greed," the last of a series, Hollywood had the good sense of never entrusting Stroheim with the making of another such film, though he has continued to this day as a character actor.

Shaw blurbs on:

"Such men as Gabriel Pascal are godsends to the arts to which they are devoted."

But sound judgment, which is the basis of good art, has little in common with "Cæsar and Cleopatra." True, the "Kolossal" sets over which Pascal found himself the ruler, were a kingdom which he had acquired as if by a miracle. For two years, during which a certain number of Anglo-Saxons were helping to clean up Axis tyranny overseas, Gabby was lording it over a number of English-



"The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari." The so-called "Golden Age" film of 1919 that cast its shadow upon future Germany. Note even the uncanny facial resemblance to Hitler in the leading character (Cesare) played by Conrad Veidt. Note the dead woman, often seen in Sadist films. (See page 31).



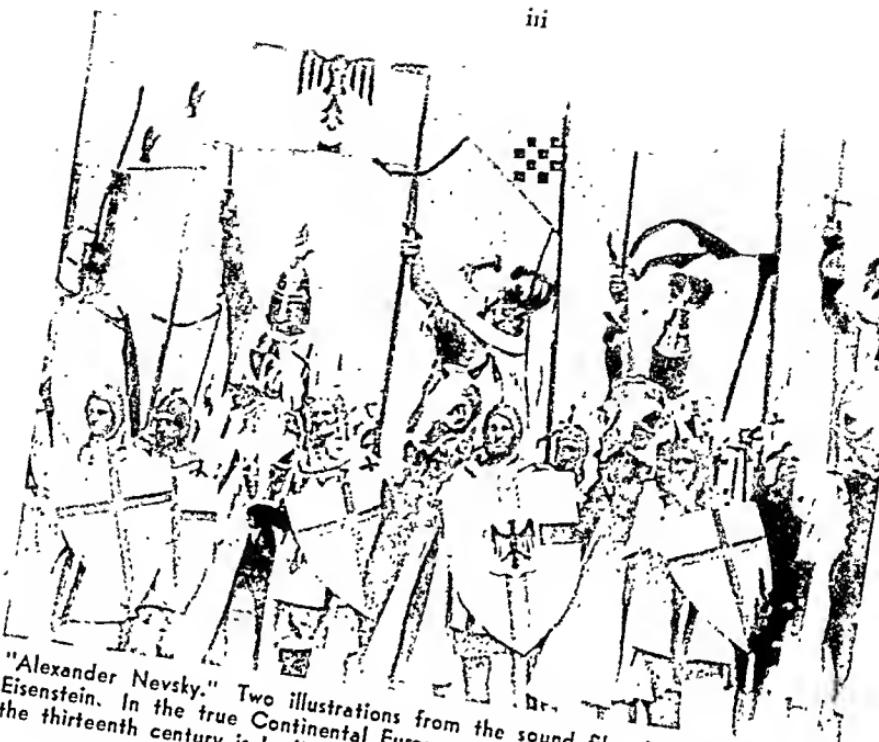
"The Hands of Orlac." Conrad Veidt in another German film of the same period. A silent picture that speaks for itself.



"The Golem." A German silent film about a statue that comes to life and then spreads destruction. Another sign post to the Nazi State a few years later.



"Extase." A silent film from neighbouring Czecho-Slovakia that boded ill for that country. Full of sex and sexual symbolism, repeated, over-heated and over-emphasised. Noted for Hedy Lamarr's debut in films.



"Alexander Nevsky." Two illustrations from the sound film directed by S. M. Eisenstein. In the true Continental European tradition, the Teutonic enemy of the thirteenth century is bedizened and glorified in full and terrifying panoply, while, below:



The poor Russians, "our people," are bedraggled and humiliated, tortured and slaughtered by the Teutons. A good example of the chronic Soviet Russian habit of "accentuating the negative and eliminating the positive." (See page 160).



"La Bête Humaine." A French film of the morbid depression school made before 1939. An unfortunate tendency has since developed in Britain and America to copy this style of film making.



"L'Atalante" (French). This film, says critic Dilys Powell, is NOT "the purest, oldest ackamarackus." (See page 107).



"Double Crime On The Maginot Line." A French film, about 1938, which reflects most vividly the mental and moral confusion that led to the tragic Fall of France shortly afterwards. The man lying dead is a spy in the services of Hitler. He had sought the secrets of the Maginot defenses, had murdered two French officers, nearly succeeded in murdering the French Commander-in-Chief, and (like Goering at Nuremberg) escaped justice by suicide. Yet this same rat is saluted as the film ends, and the words spoken as an obituary are: "We must be just, he was a man and a good officer." And those are the films we are asked to admire.

"The Picture of Dorian Gray." An American film with a far from American theme, combining the macabre, the sinister and the anti-social. Based on the decadent story by Oscar Wilde. (See page 111).





"The Picture of Dorian Gray." The insinuating, glib-tongued Lord Wooton at the first meeting with the painter of Dorian's picture, and, below:



The stress on Oriental luxury and the pleasures of the senses.



"The Picture of Dorian Gray." The scene at the dinner table, and, below:



By comparison, the scene at the low tavern, with Dorian Gray listening to Sybil Vane singing "Little Yellow Bird."



"Gone With The Wind" (M.G.M.). By contrast with "Dorian Gray," this film of 1938 represents one of the poor achievements of the American cinema. Instead of horror and morbidity, there is balance between the good and evil impulses in human nature, between riches and poverty, between happiness and misfortune.

"Gone With The Wind," Vivian Leigh and Clark Gable

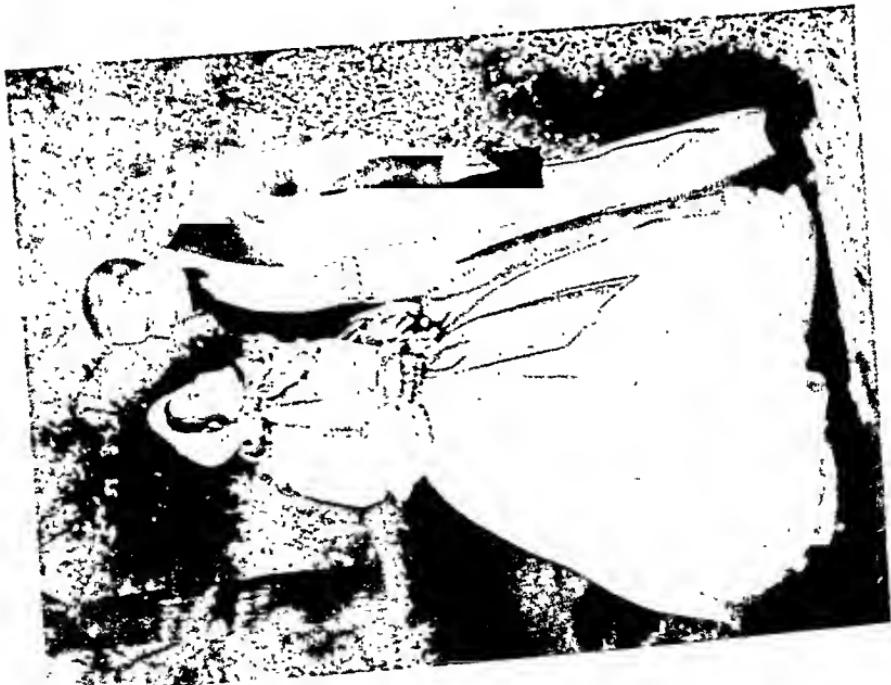


"Gone With The Wind,"

Vivian Leigh and Clark Gable

"Lost in Howard and Olivia De Havilland,

Contrasting loves.





"Gone With The Wind." Two illustrations high-lighting contrasting stations in life.



"A Matter of Life and Death," the famous Powell-Pressburger masterpiece. A pure exercise of the subconscious. Notice the Allied uniforms, and that even the Heavenly receptionists are in uniform. (See page 65).



"A Matter of Life and Death." A scene in which Squadron-Leader Carter is supposed to be hovering between life and death, part of him on the operating table and part facing the inhabitants of "Heaven."



"A Matter of Life and Death." The judge in "Heaven" and the jury (which is only half a jury—six instead of twelve), who are also the accusers of Britain, perjure themselves by telling half and not the whole truth about Britain. They "remember" the alleged evils, but they "forget" the great good that Britain has also contributed for the benefit of the Frenchman, Boer, Russian, Chinese, Indian and Irishman, and, indeed, for the whole world.



Another "Heavenly" scene. This time on the escalator staircase, with the judges in the centre and sundry "Heavenly" folk looking on.



"A Matter of Life and Death." On the left, counsel for the defense of Britain [played by Roger Livesey, the Colonel] and on the right the French fop, the Heavenly Messenger, who, too, "lost his head." Blimp in the previous "Life and Death" [and on the right Marshal Patain, who, too, "lost his head"], and on the right [an obvious subconscious symbol for Marshal Patain] Hitler's Heavenly Valhalla. Between [played by Marius Goring], an obvious antecedent to Hitler in 1940 and who failed to succumb to Hitler in 1940.



"The Way To The Stars." British—and praised to the skies. Compare this with below:



"Blood On The Sun"—American, and presented in this country with no special fanfares. The reader may be left to judge for himself as to which film gives evidence of greater film craft, authenticity, honesty of presentation, lack of staginess. (See page 113).



Two stills from "Odd Man Out," a Rank film containing almost every ingredient in the Sadist complex; mud, blood, torture, junk heaps, darkness, slums, death, destruction, robbery and murder, and the time concept; the film opening at the stroke of four and closing with two deaths linked to twelve o'clock. Man meets girl, not to live but to die together as Hitler died with Eva Braun. Shall we meekly accept this film as a portent, or shall we take warning, and challenge this monstrous cult?

men, whom he dressed up as Romans and Egyptians, and ruling them as tyrannically as any dictator. He was dissatisfied with everybody—everybody, of course, excepting Shaw. (This type of mind follows a fixed pattern. You may stamp upon your subordinates, but you must always fawn upon those who are the source of your power.) He quarrelled over the smallest detail and succeeded in doing everybody's work except his own. In Hollywood, an average top-class film may be completed in ten weeks of shooting time, with every technician and player assigned to his appropriate place. Not so with Gabby.

Believing in nobody, he had to turn to a reliance on the effect of the display of *things* rather than upon the work of *people*. That was only to be expected, for the human mind works that way. The disregard for human beings and the living, is compensated for by a worship of property and of things which are inanimate and have only a *semblance* of life, such as paintings and *objets d'art*. Ex-Reichs-Marshal Goering's notorious weakness for collecting the cream of Europe's art galleries is still remembered. If you think this is a libel on Paseal, please read Paseal's own words. We quote:

"Soon, two weeks after we start, I find that all is going smoothly. Everybody is satisfied and I say to myself. 'If this goes on, we shall all be so pleased with ourselves that there will be no life in my film! It is good for them to suffer. It is good for their art that I make them unhappy."

Here we have the old moth-eaten Continental philosophy of Sadism stated in a nutshell. So that "my" film, a thing, an object with a semblance of life may prosper, hundreds of the living and the sentient must spend their lives in misery. Says Paseal further:

"I decide that I must make enemies, but I am really a very simple man. They may hate me now, but they will love me when they see the film."

Pascal has succeeded well enough in making enemies. For two years he lorded it like a Magyar Boyar. For sixteen hours a day, he says, he "worked to inspire himself," so that others may not "take the life out" of his film! He would rather do it himself! Devoting himself to the mission of bringing the work of "that sweet man," Shaw, to the screen, his efforts were rewarded by the unlimited enthusiasm of his master, who thought the film would "lick creation."

Unfortunately for the partners in this mutual admiration society, and despite the immense sums spent on paid publicity for the film, hardly one critic could be found to say a good word for "Cæsar and Cleopatra" when it was first shown. Instead, a storm arose that blew Rank's, Shaw's and Paseal's hats right off. Shaw and Paseal retired for a while to console each other, and Mr. Rank kept himself aloof—*incommunicado*. The film has cost and lost a great deal of money, but the loss to the prestige of the British nation, hitherto renowned for stability, humanity and common sense, has been

incalculable.

But here is a point that should give all persons of good will considerable food for thought. Everyone, whether he be Socialist, non-Socialist or Conservative, must pose the question: If Bernard Shaw has been the spearhead of Socialist propaganda for sixty years, if Shaw is Socialism and Socialism is Shaw, if "Cæsar and Cleopatra" is the expression of Socialist culture, if in the whole wide world no one but Gabriel Pascal could be found to do the will of Socialist Mr. Shaw, if the making of "Cæsar and Cleopatra" has been tyrannous in execution, and the message of the film is Sadist, what future for the people of Britain and for the world does all this portend? And if the thought leaves you rather uneasy, what are you doing about it?

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MR. J. ARTHUR RANK, who came into the industry with exceedingly laudable intentions, is chairman of the leading film making, film distributing and exhibiting group of companies in the country. Mr. Rank is currently spoken of as being in control of the industry. It is not true. The industry is in control of Mr. Rank. Had it been otherwise, he would never have condoned the financing of "Caesar and Cleopatra." Mr. Rank is like the person of fame and fable who went out to take a ride on a tiger. It was not long before the result was registered in the smile on the face of the tiger.

The head of the famous firm of millers, Mr. Rank is a man of deep religious feeling, and a very astute business executive in the milling business which has served us well by giving us good wheat and bread for good money. There is hardly a loaf of bread consumed in the country, or a packet of self-raising flour under the Brown and Polson or other trade mark, that does not derive from Mr. Rank's organisation.

Coming from the most ancient, the most steady, stable, humdrum and respected industry in the world, that of providing the staff of life, Mr. Rank enters an industry which is exceedingly recent, measured in historical time, an industry which demands quite other habits of mind than that required by the steady rhythm of the milling business, as regular and as relatively unchanging as the seasons and the gathering of the crops.

Mr. Rank has done a good job, attending to our physical sustenance. Now he will cater for our mental and moral well-being. From food for the body to food for the soul; that seems to be the natural order of progression. The body must be satisfied before the mind can be cultivated, or "re-created," or entertained. It is hardly an accident that in the earlier history of the cinema, it was the butchers and the bakers, the clothing merchants and the furriers, who pioneered the way. Those who fed us and clothed us had a good idea of our recreational needs, both here and in America. The only difference is that the Americans have advanced and leapt forward since the pioneering days, while here we seem to have been content to lean and stumble and stagger on the Government crutches of the Quota Act.

Be that as it may, Mr. Rank had, at the start of his film career, all the winning cards in his hand. Plenty of money. Immense prestige. Vast personal experience of large-scale finance and business organisation and every possible qualification for combining good business practice with a sound public policy. He had every possible advantage, and yet one over-riding disability; an almost pathetic inclination to place himself in the hands of his "experts," and a lack of any desire to study and compare the *differences* between the flour business with which he was familiar and the film business which, to him, was at first a *terra incognita*.

This disability seems to arise as a defect of the very qualities which Mr. Rank has, in the course of his career, cultivated and developed. Mr. Rank thinks and acts in terms of large-scale finance. Standing upon an eminence, he sees the forest in majestic perspective, but he has lost the ability of climbing down occasionally to examine the individual trees, shrubs and plants which, as separate entities, form the forest. If he were to reflect a little, he would begin to detect a few self-evident truths which, when thoroughly grasped, would strengthen his hand against some of his phoney "experts."

He would argue it all out in the traditional English manner of working from the known to the unknown, from the familiar to the strange, from flour milling to filming, and these are the conclusions he would be bound to reach:

Every business of any kind whatever, however vast and complex, has as its ultimate objective the satisfying of the human needs of a particular person, a living, walking, working human being called a consumer. This fellow's name, of course, is legion, but it is also Bill Smith or Jack Brown, that lone chap at a wayside café or good pull-up, having a cup of tea (supplied by Lyons) and a "doorstep" (made with Mr. Rank's flour). The duke and the dustman, the patrician, the artisan, and their wives and children, all have separate and individual pangs of hunger satisfied by the collective milling and distribution of the baked results of Mr. Rank's produce, which differ only from films in that they are made to satisfy the body through the stomach, while films are, or should be, designed to sustain the human spirit, to recreate, to inspire, to enliven the human soul through the visual and aural senses.

In supplying food for the body, and before it is ready for marketing, Mr. Rank has to employ the process of winnowing the chaff from the wheat. It would never do to offer the whole thing, holus bolus, without separating the one from the other. The good in the grain is taken and sold for consumption; the bad is rejected. In doing this, Mr. Rank follows ancient and sound commercial and social practice, which Mr. Bing Crosby has explained and sung to the tune of "accentuating the positive and eliminating the negative."

Now, what Mr. Rank is doing or allowing to be done in British films is the exact opposite of common sense and common commercial practice. Any other business, having to abide by the free and open

influences of the market, unprotected by any kind of Government Quota Act, would find itself quickly in bankruptcy, if it did what the British film industry is doing by grace of Government protection—offering the public the bad and eliminating the good in the portrayal of human relationships.

Despite his public pronouncements in the *Daily Mail*, in 1942, that he aims to make at least a few films with a positive social and religious content, embracing such subjects as John Bunyan and Mary Magdalene, and despite the clear lessons of such American films as the Bing Crosby "Going My Way," in which kindness, humanity and religion are the dominating influences, Mr. Rank's films have, since 1942, accentuated the negative content more and more with each succeeding year, while the positive is at vanishing point until there is hardly a scrap of human feeling or emotion of fellow feeling, kinship, or love, or affection, left. Every year, while Mr. Rank spends more and more on the outer material trappings, the inner content of his films get worse and worse. Can he "pass the buck" and blame his lieutenants?

He had the right idea when he made himself personally responsible for the colour film, "The Great Mr. Handel." It needed only a little better acting, a little better casting, a little better scripting and a little better direction, and it would have been a world-beater. At this point there seems to have been an about-face. Mr. Rank acclaimed John Bunyan the positive and the Christian, but now embraced G. Bernard Shaw, the most negative anti-Christian in Christendom. He acclaimed Mary Magdalene, but made "Fanny By Gaslight." Is Mr. Rank responsible for the choice of these themes?

One would have imagined that Mr. Rank could hardly be a helpless victim in the toils of fate, as the Germans imagine themselves to be when things go badly for them. He is a man with a soul of his own. He is the captain at the controls, unless our suspicion is confirmed that the controls control Mr. Rank.

With the existence of Quota, which encourages *laissez faire* and do-as-you-please, with Mr. Rank's choice of executive personnel, with an increasing negative content in his films, with no encouragement for a scientific approach to the problem of story content, with business practices in film making which are utterly opposed to common sense and consumer interest, how does Mr. Rank expect to break in on the world market, where the Germans, the French and the Italians, under similar home conditions, have failed, and have helped to ruin their respective countries in the process?

In America, where the study of consumer interest was absolutely forced upon film executives on pain of bankruptcy, the American film developed through studied concern for the consumer and deliberate cultivation. A garden which is uncultivated and fenced in, like the Quota-protected market in Britain, creates the favourable conditions for the growth of quick growing, tenaciously rooted

weeds, and these weeds grow thicker and bushier and worse the longer they are encouraged to grow. It is easier to grow wild than to grow cultivated. It is easier to fall than to rise to the heights. It is easier to drink more than is good for you than to resist excess. In human nature the pull downward, as in physics, is stronger than the pull in the opposite direction. Yet man has had to force himself above his primal animal nature, or he would never have become man.

Certainly, therefore, for the above reasons, the path downwards is easier and probably profitable, if immediate and instant profits are what you are looking for in the film business. But the path of "Going My Way," though infinitely harder, is infinitely more stable, infinitely more worth while, and certainly more profitable *in the long run*.

Sustaining public morality is the same as offering wheat freed from the chaff, the "positive accentuated and the negative eliminated," the product of care, cultivation and attention, and not the wild careless growth of a protected market sanctuary. And as to controlling the film industry, what can be said of a ship's captain who sets course for Nova Scotia, but finds himself at the end of the voyage at a port near Timbuctoo? It could be said that the captain's ship had been drifting, that the captain had not been navigating with the aid of the sextant and stars, but that he had been navigated by the winds and the currents. Not the master, but the mastered, is the condition of any man who sets out with John Bunyan and lands instead, via "Blythe Spirit," into the arms of G. Bernard Shaw.

Is it possible for anyone to believe that a success can be made of a business run without a sextant and guide, without a code, without principles and without principle? If the Bible is the right code for private conduct, what is wrong with it for a large-scale business affecting the souls of millions upon millions of human beings the world over?

Certainly, not by any means do all American film makers adhere to the Hays code, any more than all Christians behave strictly according to the Sermon on the Mount. And the Hays office, being a human institution, has often slipped up badly, as we shall have occasion to show. The essential point, however, is that in America the body of law for the film industry exists and adds its weight as a conditioning factor in American film production. Without it there would be chaos, just as in social life the complete removal of the Christian system of ethics leaves nothing but chaos and a return to the primeval jungle, as in Hitler Germany.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

LET US NOW TURN OUR ATTENTION to the phenomenon of the professional film critics, very few of whom are imbued with the purpose that inspires the scientist who is at all times conscious of his responsibility to his fellow men.

A scientist does not record his own personal reactions in terms of : "I like this, but I don't like that, but I think you will like this if you are fond of that." The scientific worker observes a phenomenon, reads all the data concerning it, and forms his own judgment from a synthesis of all available information.

That's all right for scientists, but not for the majority of film critics. Without a keen sense of responsibility, honest observation, and clear thinking, there can be no judgment, and without judgment there can be no creative film industry. The lack of a high standard of criticism partially explains the low state of our films in terms of world appreciation. We have already discussed some of the other contributing factors. As long as the fixed reflex habit of deriding American films is elevated as a cult, it offers the British film maker an easy alibi. He will make films to the critics' pattern and the matter is settled. Quota will do the rest.

It is not so many years ago that a prominent film critic spoke of one of the most vital and fundamental impulses in human existence as a "dollop of mother love," which is oh! so clever.

In embracing the Shaw-de Sade cult of soaking their minds in the evil and temporary in man, and ignoring the tenderness and the eternal, revered throughout the ages as the Madonna principle, the critics say, in effect : "These poor fish, the public, the mob who have their withers wrung! We, having brains and intellect, have no need of withers and therefore cannot have them wrung! We're superior!"

By how much are these people really superior? The casting out of the higher, the tender emotions of life, means putting something else in their place, since nothing exists in a vacuum, and the emotional accompaniments of an earlier, more primitive, more cruel existence take their place.

Literature and the more venerable arts are still treated with some measure of social responsibility, but criticism of the film lags far behind. We are usually treated to the ebb and flow of somebody's

subconscious mind, anarchical, arbitrary and egotistical. That is what mainly passes for film criticism.

We will take a few sample criticisms to show the reader that on the question of the mass film there is not the slightest difference of opinion between the critics of the Left and those of the Right. What, for instance, is the attitude of the Left Wing "Progressive" Tribune on the question of the social good or the social ill in films? In an issue of January, 1945, while the war against the Nazis was still in progress, Winifred Horrabin, film critic, gave pen to the currently accepted paradoxical, Shavian line followed by all the critics of praising the British "Waterloo Road" and decrying the American "Since You Went Away." As was to be expected, the first-named offered you ideas on dodging your social duty, and the latter showed a group of people on the American home front who, with all their weaknesses, carried on without a thought of dodging entering their minds.

Thereupon we sent a letter to the *Tribune*, which was politely acknowledged by Aneurin Bevan, M.P., the editor, but was never published or even mentioned in the *Tribune*. The letter read:

Every film that has ever been made is intentionally or unintentionally, wittingly or unwittingly, a clear advocacy of a code of behaviour. A novel printed in book form tells about *what was*, but a film acts as a visible, moving, living example to follow. Now take "Waterloo Road." The film seems to suggest that it is quite the normal thing to dodge the army and so get the girl and the gold, while the soldier who thinks he is about to lose his wife to a crook, decides that it is quite in order to subordinate the national interest and desert so that he may settle his private marital affairs. How far would we have stood up to the Nazis if that kind of behaviour had been general? Ah! but it's the truth! It happens, and has happened like that in real life. Truth! But if "Waterloo Road" is true, surely "Since You Went Away" is true, too. Surely it must be a thousand times more true because it happens a thousand times more often. Supposing the ratio in real life were the other way round. Supposing there were a thousand "Waterloo Road" cases to one of "Since You Went Away"! Just supposing! Then there is all that bridling up and shuddering at "sentiment" and *Saturday Evening Post* popular serials. What on earth is there to shudder at in sentiment? The word means *feeling*. What grounds are there for regarding sentiment as low, vulgar, cheap and insupportable? Social? Moral? Political? Intellectual? The exercise of intellect without social purpose and social feeling is a cold and barren pastime. The greatest men are those who both *think and feel* for their fellows. If we take the opposite of sentiment to mean without pity, or ruthless, we can readily see where the cult of anti-sentiment may lead.

Faith, Hope, Charity, Mercy, Love and family affection may not mean much to professional film critics, but they have been the leaven that has raised and widened the human family in all its evolutionary forms—the family, the clan, the tribe, the nation, and soon—we hope—the great family of nations.

When these founts of social being dry up, what is there left? What is there to preserve us, either as individuals or as a society? Surely it is time that this sheer reflex habit of the film critics decrying every progressive advocacy of moral and social conduct should be placed under critical examination.

No one in the *Tribune* thought fit to give a reasoned reply to our letter. Why the *Tribune*, which claims that it champions the cause of the masses, should loathe the very soul and substance of civilised behaviour when it is offered in the mass-consumed film, can only be explained as a schizophrenic, paradoxical manifestation which is rampant throughout our Shaw-influenced world.

Where unreasoning and arbitrary prejudice rules, judgment is inevitably clouded. The kind of world the *Tribune* says it is out to obtain for the mass of the people is impossible as long as there is this fundamental lack of judgment on the pernicious character of the film output of the European school, of which "Waterloo Road" is only one of many examples.

You cannot separate wrong thinking on art, culture and films from wrong thinking on political and international affairs. These apparent divisions actually form a whole, just as the author of "Cæsar and Cleopatra," and the man who publicly congratulated de Valera for mourning Hitler's death, is one and the same person. If the *Tribune* cannot be relied on to know the difference between what is good for people and what is bad for them in films, how can we trust the *Tribune* to lead us towards the Brave New World? The same question might be put to Professor Harold J. Laski. How can you trust the judgment and discernment of this most prominent leader of a great political party, how can you trust him with any political task, or anything whatever, when he was capable of passing an opinion in *The Left Book News*, of February, 1938, to the following effect, at a time when American films were at their very highest peak:

Financial and moral corruption, the prostitution of what might be a great social art to the meanest ends, power largely divorced from communal responsibility. . . . Realise that Hollywood is built upon a road, the structure of which leads directly to the Germany of Hitler, Goering and Goebbels. Remember that it is to keep alive the kind of thing that Hollywood is today that Guernica and Almeria were bombed.

In the light of what has since happened, the thought that this prognostication was held and believed in by Laski, whose followers can be counted in millions, is little short of appalling. If this is leadership, where does it lead—where can it lead? Laski's guess (for it was only a guess and not an objective, scientific statement

based on scientific data, carefully examined and sifted) was that Hollywood, being a nest of moral corruption, would lead directly to Hitler Germany. Barely four years later, the vast masses of America, whose main cultural food was the product of that same "corrupt" Hollywood, were pouring out their blood together with the British, the Chinese, the Russians and the people of the other United Nations, to stamp out Hitler Germany. Where was Laski's judgment in 1938? If thought precedes action in the real world, which it does, how could (to quote Laski) "moral corruption and the prostitution of a great art" condition the American people to fight *against* the moral corruption which was Nazi Germany? Can it be that the thistles of Hollywood suddenly brought forth the figs of Lease-Lend and all aid to all free men? According to Laski's diagnosis, the Americans should have embraced Hitlerism, instead of helping to destroy it.

This is the kind of cultural leadership we were favoured with by the Left. What about the Right? Were they any better before the war, during the war, and since?

The Observer, July 2nd, 1939 (in a letter from Paris):

The public prefers to have its music and its drama cheap or tinned.

This was, and still is, about the most common form of fashionable side-kick at the cinema. For a good example of the frontal attack, read Val Gielgud in *The Star*, February 15th, 1939:

It did not take a vast experience of Hollywood to know that it was useless to suggest that the principal reason for the success of French films is the fact that their stories are, for the most part, written for adults by grown-up people, instead of by morons for morons, and there are a lot of people nowadays who wish to go to the cinema without automatically reverting to their second childhood.

By morons for morons! It would be interesting to know whether Mr. Gielgud, who ministers to the nation's intellectual needs through his plays at the B.B.C., is still of the same mind! Strange, is it not, that the American and British peoples, who preferred the rugged, manly humanity of Spencer Tracy in "Boys' Town," rather than the decadent effeminacies of Sacha Guitry, should be first in the fight for human freedom and decency, and that the country that produced the "adult" and "successful" Guitry in the "grown-up" "Romance of a Cheat" should present us with the senile Marshal Pétain, the crawling Laval, the cheat Darlan. The French films have indeed been "successful"—all too successful, more's the pity.

In *The Observer* of July 16th, 1939, less than one year before the fall of France, this is how C. A. Lejeune reviewed two films in one and the same article. One was American, the other French. Notice the difference in the treatment:

THE AMERICAN FILM:

"Serenade," which you can see at the Empire this week if you are prepared to devote one hundred and thirteen minutes to it, is a handsome account, with occasional sepia and rose-pink tintings, of the emotional and professional experience of a talented young couple, Mr. and Mrs. James Seymour (née Mary Hale) . . . What happens to the de Valli scholarship? Well, I hope it is passed on to some nice young man from the Middle West, who has a dear old mother and three snub-nosed children to support and who hasn't had a chance to forget one conservatory, let alone three.

THE FRENCH FILM:

"Hostages" is in the great tradition of French pictures . . . "Hostages," beautifully acted in every corner of its cast, is at once moving, ironic, tender, suspenseful, and often lit by the most absurd and charming gaiety . . . The effect is a picture in which every character is a human being, and every field and footpath a place that somebody has loved and trod.

A bludgeon for the American film—kid gloves for the French. This blind French worship is, of course, only another expression of the well-worn art-for-art's sake obsession. It does not matter what you put into a film—a tonic or a poison. How you make the film is everything. As well argue that how you eat is more important than what you eat, how you love more important than whom you love. It matters not whom you cheer during the war, Churchill or Hitler, as long as you cheer artistically!

The identical attitude of mind colours the opinions of Lejeune's twin sister, Dilys Powell, in the otherwise dignified *Sunday Times*. The same incredible approach to the American film, the same prostration and salaaming towards the French. How's this as a sample opening sentence?

Seen "Ball of Fire"? Well, patch my pantywaist! Quit futzing around and shove in your clutch. Don't be a sad-apple!

Cut the Menkenes and get going. You'll have a hoytoytot!

Thus Dilys Powell, although towards the middle of the article she cannot help but praise the film in question:

Howard Hawkes has directed the film with a faultless sense of timing . . .

And to end:

"Ball of Fire" shows us what Hollywood can do when it sticks to native material and fantasy rooted in its own subways and sidewalks; and really, you know, I begin to fret less over the absence of new French films.

So you see the only time an American film may be praised grudgingly is when it reminds Dilys Powell of the so-much-lamented French films which were in such short supply during the war, that their absence caused her to fret. But not for long. Some months later there was a one-night revival of a French film, "L'Atalante,"

given by the London Film Institute Society, and this gave Dilys Powell an opportunity of descanting at the full length of her allotted column in the *Sunday Times* of February 14th, 1943. A few choice excerpts may serve:

"*L'Atalante*" is the product of an imagination truly cinematic in that it creates exclusively through the moving picture image.

Any film that has ever been made "creates through the moving picture image." Why single out this film for praise on that account? Here is further adulation:

But the singular talent—for once I think I may say genius—of the film lies in its translation into visual images of the mysterious and terrible and piteous undertones of even the simplest human life. And when I say visual images I do not mean that Jean Vigo (the director) went outside the realistic for illustration; the poetry of this interpretation of life is conveyed without any recourse to extravagant symbolism.

That's the stuff! You can almost hear the smacking of lips at the mention of "the mysterious and terrible and piteous undertones." And, says Dilys Powell, there is no extravagant symbolism. Isn't there? In the very next sentence she describes the film in terms which any student of Freud would recognise at once as full of subconscious, sleep-walking symbolism of the most obvious character:

The uncouth skipper of the barge shows the girl the treasures of his cabin: an elephant's tusk here, a musical box there, a jar with human hands monstrously preserved, a mask, a crude picture, the inevitable nude tattooed on his own back, and all at once the audience becomes aware of a life acquisitive, romantic, touching, shut in with its own dream.

This is getting extremely interesting. The acquisitive life associated with a "jar with human hands monstrously preserved." The plundering Nazis had precisely similar inclinations towards relics of human bodies, as the investigations in their camps have shown. And there is also that peculiar obsession with the cutting off of heads and hands as in Shaw's "*Cæsar and Cleopatra*," and the headless Messenger in "*A Matter of Life and Death*," if you remember. How does it come about? Is there no relation—no connection between one phenomenon and its related symptom?

There is more and more praise for the film in the same strain. Then comes this rich piece:

... and behind the odd fantasy of the scene there looms the vast fantasy of temptation and the glittering image of desire. The wife, truant, finds her purse snatched by a pick-pocket, and there is the terror of cruelty and loss; the husband, deserted, runs madly towards the emptiness at low tide, and there is the inhumanity of nature in the face of human misery.

There it is again—as in Shaw. There, in the last sentence, we see the same Shaw-de Sade worship of “cosmism,” the delight in the contemplation of the alleged cruelty of nature and “the face of human misery.” You have only to feed your mind on such “pleasures” sufficiently long and sufficiently often; you have only to spread these ideas far and wide and deep among the mass of the people, and the grinning physical reality of Nazidom will be waiting for you at the end of the road—for the second time, and this time Nazidom may not necessarily have a German outer covering.

A whole lengthy column is offered up by Dilys Powell as incense to the worship of the French “*L'Atalante*.” At the end of the column appear just about six lines to describe an American film.

Observe :

As far as “Pittsburgh” is concerned, I am not prepared to put any strain on my good will.

This story of coal miners (John Wayne and Randolph Scott) who become coal-owners and rivals for the affections of La Dietrich is the purest and oldest aekamarackus.

The reader himself can judge from the description given by Dilys Powell of this French and this American film as to which of these two is “the purest, oldest aekamarackus.” He can judge for himself as to which is the old, the decrepit, the decayed, the shrivelled and the putrescent, and he will give his own verdict accordingly.

To return to C. A. Lejeune in further illustration of the current reflex habit of tremulous worship of the French and the shaking of a fist at the American film. *The Observer*, February 8th, 1942. Please notice the date. About nineteen months after the fall of France. But before or after, to our critics it makes not the slightest difference. That the tragedy of France was both reflected and projected by the abysmal moral condition of the French film was something which these cotton-wool critics found too shocking to contemplate. What did it matter if millions of French people suffered the consequences of their cultural leadership? Our dilettante insisted upon having their own pleasures: pleasure first, pleasure last, pleasure all the time. Pleasure at any cost in subsequent social suffering, pleasure though the heavens fall, pleasure though Europe may turn to a shambles. Listen :

The best fiction film of the week is a French one. “*L'Eselave Blanche*.” An episode, romanticised, certainly, but rich in atmosphere, of domestic life in Turkey under the last Sultan, and the first faint stirrings of that emancipation that Kemal Ataturk was presently to bring his people.

Those faint stirrings Lejeune mentions are so faint in the film that they are indeed non-existent. There is not a mention or a hint of emancipation for women in this picture. The period is long before the war, the first World War, and the atmosphere of the subjugation of women under the dominance of the male within the harem system

is conveyed with all the cynicism, degradation and contempt for womenkind that precedes the dissolution of any society, as indeed Abdul Hamid's Turkey did dissolve. There is no redeeming feature in the film. A struggle for emancipation would have given the film purpose, health and leadership.

That this struggle against evil is absent from the film is unconsciously proved by Lejeune herself. She describes the heroine: a Parisian, "svelte and elegant" in the costume of the time, who comes to Turkey as the bride of a Turkish diplomat, a man full of "advanced" ideas about electricity and sanitation for the good of Turkey, but with fixed and backward ideas about the rights of others. Then:

From her husband's mother and little sister, from the women servants, from the chatter of women friends, she learns the nuances of life behind the veil, the inter-mural politics of the harem world. She finds, to her horror and surprise, that a man who is absolutely sound on sewerage may have few scruples about taking a second wife.

What a tasteful association of ideas: sewerage and the taking of a second wife. What a beautiful theme, this story with "The White Slave" as its title. What rapture in the contemplation of perversity and double-crossing, and the demented chatter of women forced to live in total segregation away from the normal association of men-folk. Lejeune goes on:

"L'Esclave Blanche" is not the sensational thing its title suggests, but is delicate rather, precisely observed. Directed by Marc Sorkine . . . and "supervised" by the celebrated Pabst, it never reaches great heights but does all the small things tastefully and well.

Then she goes on to the consideration of a number of American films. One of the most wonderful and affecting rôles Gary Cooper ever appeared in was in "Sergeant York," a picture that digs into the very root and substance of man's eternal struggle with himself and his desire to better mankind by opposing the forces of evil. The picture was based on the life of a real Sergeant York who had fought in the war of 1914-1918. Nevertheless, Lejeune dismisses it in a line as "obviously propaganda for the moment." Further down the column there is this of another American film:

I really don't know why anyone should want to make a film like "Breach of Promise," but since someone apparently did, it was wise, I think, to put Miss Judy Campbell into it . . .

And again of another:

Barbara Stanwyck, as an old dame of 109, who recalls in flashback the joys and sorrows of her life in the pioneer West. Some may find the old dear a bit garrulous.

And finally:

"Naval Academy." Freddy Bartholomew, Jimmy Lydon and Billy Cook as optimistic cadets who think they can escape

from the Santa Claus of a Hollywood Naval Academy, but find, of course, they can't.

All that style and snootiness on American films in the self-same column at the head of which such fulsome and unqualified praise is offered to the French "The White Slave." The Sergeant York who fought the good fight, so that men may live, is dismissed as of little consequence compared with the "sewage" of a French film of white slavery, showing a society in the last throes of decay. Shaw has taken possession of the minds of these film critics without the said critics being in the slightest degree aware of what has been happening to them or how it happened.

This is shown even more glaringly in *The Observer* of May 6th, 1945. Two days before the declared Victory over Evil in Europe, Lejeune extols evil by actually quoting Shaw, starting her article thus:

"I wish," George Bernard Shaw wrote in the days when criticism was criticism and no nonsense, "this invertebrate generation would make up its mind either to believe in the devil or disbelieve . . . A snivelling remorseful devil, with his heart in the right place, sneaking about the area railings of heaven in the hope that he will be let in and forgiven, is an abomination to me. The Lean Person in "Peer Gynt," whose occupation was gone because men sinned so half-heartedly that nobody was worth damning, gained my sympathy at once. But a devil who is himself half-hearted—whose feud with heaven is the silliest sort of lover's quarrel—who believes that he is in the wrong and God is in the right—pah!"

Lejeune offers her readers this Shavian laudation of the devil (that is, the age-old conceptual personification of anti-social evil) with gusto, for she herself follows on with:

And so I repeat of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's portrait of the devil in "The Picture of Dorian Gray"—pah! for Dorian Gray ought to be the devil incarnate.

The subservience to Shaw, which has been implicit in Lejeune's writings for years, becomes quite explicit. No disciple, surely, has offered closer allegiance to the Master. Just how close and complete is this allegiance can be seen from this sample slice of Lejeune's review lower down the column:

"The Picture of Dorian Gray," as Oscar Wilde wrote it, was, consciously or unconsciously, a grim morality play. It was as moral as the Book of Job, although far more dated. It implied a sense of belief in good because it believed so whole-heartedly in evil.

The last sentence is almost an exact re-echo of Shaw in his Notes on Caesar: "having virtue he had no need of goodness." What are we to make of these people?

If belief in good is the same as a whole-hearted belief in evil, if good is evil and evil is good; if God is in the right—pah! and Hitler

was a statesman, murder in a play a pleasant pastime, and murder by Nazi authority is ignored as a manifestation of "cosmism," then what do these critics and dilettanti, these Shaws and their satellites, use language for? To convey meaning to such as you and me?

And where does all this confusion of thought and expression lead to? The fixed notion that evil is good, that the French film is good and the good American film is bad unless it is made to the French pattern, leads directly to the praise of any British film that conforms to the French screwball pattern, with the result that our film makers, feeding on such praise, continue to make European patterned stuff which cannot possibly have the remotest chance of achieving world circulation. These eminent critics are not primarily film critics, but *litterateurs* and lovers of the *static* arts.

That is why the French films of Renoir, for instance, are offered adoration because of the magical association of the name with the *static* painted pictures of the past, made famous by the father of the director, Renoir senior.

These film critics are not film critics in the strict sense, because they think, eat, live and breathe the current notions of the pre-filmic arts. The film is a *motion picture*. That is how the Americans describe it and know it. It has aesthetic and social qualities of its own. The Americans speak of the "movies"; we of the "pictures." The latter notion is so much a conditioning factor in British film production that there is even a British producing company called Gainsborough Pictures.

The critics and our film makers are strongly tied, subconsciously, to the *static*, not to the moving picture. This, and the allegiance to the word in printed literature, conspires to place a severe handicap upon the future development of the British film as a world market product. There are some who call for British films for British consumption only. To those we declare that a mental cultivation of that character means virtual isolation, and isolation carried to its furthest extreme would mean our doom as a nation.

By the law of co-relation, the appearance of one symptom is usually associated with other co-related symptoms of the anti-social cults which have become so frighteningly widespread. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that in her article of June 10th, 1945, Lejeune starts off like this about "The Way to the Stars":

The organised affirmation of good neighbourliness is apt to be an embarrassing spectacle, and I always go with a sinking heart to any film that professes to be a calculated mediator between nations.

Right Wing Lejeune in *The Observer* is exactly like Left Wing Horrabin in the fiery *Tribune*. There is little to choose between them. Any suggestion of positive neighbourliness or social harmony is enough to give either or both of them the creeps. However, says Lejeune further on, she need not have worried. It was quite all

right. With relief she discovered that the film was not really as neighbourly as all that.

The same Lejeune who, in 1940, shook an admonishing finger at us and advised that we should make our post-war films on the pre-war German "Dr. Caligari" pattern and has enthused for twenty-five years over French made and French inspired films, now tells us that "The Way to the Stars" is a marvellous picture. You can nearly always tell what a film is like by the person who praises it and by the people who made it. Lejeune says:

Mr. Asquith's work is one more proof that the British film has at last attained its majority. It has the great merit, rare in Hollywood pictures these days, of emotional restraint.

The emotion, indeed, is so restrained that it resembles Lejeune's "faint stirrings of emancipation" in the French film, "The White Slave"—it is almost non-existent. The rest of her article is full of such fulsome adulation, displaying a lack of emotional restraint which, in a Hollywood film, would make her shudder. The mote and the beam.

The makers are the same Asquith-de Grunewald team which has weaved as much of the French outlook into English films as they thought they could dare, starting from "French Without Tears." How a team who could think in terms of *disrupting* the family ties in "Fanny By Gaslight" could be expected to *cement* and bind together the family and national ties that link us to the Americans in the *very next film they make*, is one of those mysteries to which only Two Cities Films hold the key. And you will find it no mystery when you see the film in the light of what had been made before.

Further, says Lejeune:

The film is clearly meant to do for the Air Force what "In Which We Serve" did for the Navy and "The Way Ahead" for the Army.

"Did for" is just about right! The first mentioned film showed us, not sinking the enemy, but being sunk ourselves, while *we*—not *they*—were eternally and precariously clinging to rafts and suffering the tortures of the damned. "The Way Ahead," released at the moment when the Eighth Army was chasing the Afrika Korps neck and crop into the Mediterranean, and our morale was at the highest point since the war began, showed our men at the end, still improvising, still last-ditching, still miserably short of munitions and forever more being fired at by the still live and kicking Germans. Then fade to "beautiful" music!

Just a few more films during the war, similar to these, spreading depression at the best, and the notion of improvised incompetence at the worst, and we should have been "done for" right enough. The truth will sometimes out with almost comical unintention. It must be clear to anybody but a film critic that victory cannot be achieved by soaking your minds with the possibility of defeat and emphasis on improvisation. We had to improvise when we had to.

but to show it at the end of a fictional film is merely shaking the people's confidence in our leadership.

It was lucky for us that the weight and balance of these British made films, inspired as they were by the Continental European filmic tradition of "accentuating the negative and eliminating the positive," was exceedingly small against the overwhelming influences of the *positive* impulses in the real life of the British and American people, and in the *positive* and far more effective message of the best American film product. And yet people wonder why "*The Way Ahead*" was not accepted in America. Mr. Rank is still searching for a reason. It has been given out that the Americans find it out of date now that the war is over. The truth is, of course, that it was never in date. Its issue synchronised very badly with the victory spirit that was welling up both in this country and in America.

We have said that some of our leading film critics do not *think film*, because they are spiritually and constitutionally addicted to the pre-filmic forms of expression. Here is the proof from the same Lejeune article on "*The Way to the Stars*":

The camera ranges through empty rooms; picks up a notice here; a torn photograph there; a telephone number scribbled on a wall, a signature dashed across a mis-throw at darts . . . It is such an important sequence that I think it could well be repeated, perhaps with some variant of order, at the end of the story, *at the point of which a novel reader, with the book in front of him, would turn back the pages to refresh his memory*. The spectator cannot turn back a film, although he would often like to do so. The failure to be explicit, the reluctance to drive a dramatic point home, seems to me an exaggerated form of native modesty. There is nothing ostentatious about repeating a theme; *painters, poets and musicians have been doing it for centuries*. Some touch of this, I fancy, would benefit the picture . . .

The italics are ours to show that the concepts, the spectacles through which the film is viewed, are not those of film, but of painting, poetry, music and books. The habit is widespread. It affects even the film correspondent of *The Times*, who, in other ways, is one of the most balanced writers in the business. In his review of the same film, he writes:

The atmosphere of 1940 in particular is reconstructed with a most sensitive feeling for mood and event; faint, ironic quotation marks hover round the clipped slang phrases while history is written and decided in the clouds.

Here again, it is through the conceptual spectacles of writing, poetry, history and "quotation marks" that the author of that criticism looks at a film.

All the newspaper film critics have fallen over themselves to give "The Way to the Stars" a big boost. But was it a film with a mass world appeal? After the experience of "The Way Ahead" it is hardly likely.

Lejeune, with delicate restraint, describes the opening of "The Way to the Stars," by telling that the camera, ranging through empty rooms, "picks up a notice here," etc., but refrains from soiling the columns of *The Observer* by telling us what the notice says. Not one of the film critics, in their unanimous gush, has noted the significance of that notice picked out by the camera. But its significance shall not go unrecorded or unheeded.

Millions of people have suffered and died in the war against Nazism. Untold thousands of millions of pounds have been spent so that Nazism and all it stands for may be eliminated from the earth. Yet along come Rank-Asquith-de Grunewald, and the first thing they do in the opening shot of "The Way to the Stars" is to introduce and impress upon our minds instructions painted on an oblong enamelled plate in German Gothic lettering, and reading as follows:

Unter dem Lavabo

Befindet sich ein Topf.

Only a little thing—quite insignificant to those who deliberately blind themselves to its significance in a "British" film made for the ostensible purpose of endearing us to the Americans. That inscription conjures up a whole picture of a nation, of the backward, uncivilised physical habits of that nation, of the primitive, animal thought processes that go with those physical habits. By the law of co-relation, backwardness in any form tends to encourage backwardness in other forms. That is why the Germans were—and still are—far more fixed in their allegiance towards Hitler Nazidom than the Italians are to Mussolini Fasism. The Italian people chased and executed some of their own Fasists, but no harm has ever come to a Nazi big-wig by the hand of a German.

When, after the opening shot, "The Way to the Stars" returns in a flashback to 1940, we see the tablet hanging on a wall. It is not enough to pass it off as an irresponsible prank by someone who had taken the tablet off a train in Germany in pre-war days. No, one of our airmen must carefully and studiously read out the meaning to another, so that millions of our people may be elevated with the knowledge of how Germans are directed to comport themselves in train lavatories, and we are told that the inscription means:

Under the lavatory basin

There finds itself a pot.

But that is not enough—not nearly enough. Later in the film an American enters. He notices the tablet on the wall, and would you believe it, he, too, insists on knowing what it means. And he, too, must be carefully and deliberately told and have the translation read out to him so that the message may be well and truly planted

in our minds.

When we remember "the little bear behind" and other incidents in the same team's film, "Uneensored," we may well ask ourselves who encourages these pathological obsessions? For they are obsessions when you see them repeated in film after film. In this dangerous age of atomic power, how can we possibly expect to live safely when we allow children, utter immature undeveloped children, who think that the excretory processes are funny, how can we allow such minds to play with the most explosive cultural medium in the world, to put over puerilities and imbecilities such as these? How can we hope to survive when the co-related physical habits of the wild, the habits currently indulged in by Nazis and Germans, are spread abroad among us the way they are?

The highest power in the physical world which we now possess in the atom, must be balanced by the *highest human*—not the *lowest animal*—thought and sense impressions on our minds. What service are our film critics, from *The Times* man downwards, performing when they ignore these symptoms in our films?

And about the rest of "The Way to the Stars." A team of film makers that could be so utterly devoid of taste can be relied on to remain in character throughout. We said earlier that these film men only think in terms of disrupting the family and national ties. They cannot—they do not know how to—cement them. This is borne out in one example out of scores, when the wish is expressed by someone that a bomb should fall on Auntie instead of on a field. There is a lack of taste and feeling when a civilian, played by Basil Holloway, who spends his time safely grounded in a public house, leads the jollifications at the pub among airmen who, having fought in the clouds, are justifiably entitled to let off steam and to forget. Such lack of elementary psychology is one of the distinguishing marks of the average British film, which, according to our professional film critics, is so much superior to the American film of the same genre.

But the Asquith-de Grunewald is not the only film team addicted to the habit of introducing German (as well as French) notions into our films. You will find in "Don Chicago," a cheapie made by British National Films, the desecration of the State symbols when the Crown jewels are made the objects of contempt and cheap tomfoolery. You will also find in the same company's "Waltz Time" a situation in which a suitable consort for a Queen is an officer of the Guard whose reputation credits him with the qualities and morals of a stallion who populates a whole village with his offspring. This concept is identical with the one in Dr. Goebbel's film, "Der Ammenkoenig," described by the authors on page 121 of *The Film Answers Back*, identical in every detail, except that the Germans show the village in full view, while the village in the British film is off stage.

So you see, we have won the war against the Nazis in the field.

but we have lost the war against Nazi ideas in our own "British" film studios. If we cannot control these immature film making producers in our midst, how are we ever to control atomic power? Control the one and you control the other. Let things slide, and mankind may disappear off the earth.

Says Ernest Betts in *The Sunday Express*:

The film makers are worried . . . Film producers want ideas. Film millionaires are worried, too.

And well they might be when you think of the type of British film they are sponsoring to usher in the new world for which our people have bled. Betts says of "The Way to the Stars":

It is a great piece of England breathing the deep, nostalgic thrills of the day before yesterday. The cleverness consists in not making you sick with the customary propaganda and all that fake palsy-walsy stuff.

From that you can tell exactly what the film is like. With the Shavian cult of paradox as a clue, you may bank your last shirt on it that when a film critic says that a film is *not* "fake palsy-walsy stuff," then it is precisely that. If he says that a film is *not* "acker-maraekus" you know for certain that it is. If he says it is, then you know it isn't. It's quite easy! If only Mr. Rank would trouble to grasp this simple clue he would save himself a lot of money. He would know what *not* to make in the future. For instance, when Lejeune tells us that "The Picture of Dorian Gray" is as moral as the Book of Job, then Mr. Rank should know and act upon the knowledge that, notwithstanding what we have already said about American films in the bulk and in general, "The Picture of Dorian Gray" is one of the most anti-social films that has ever emanated from any studio, British or American. Hays just could not have been looking when this film was made. For long. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, who distributed this film, have been undisputed leaders in the American film industry. Mr. Rank should realise, before it is too late, that the road to "Dorian Gray" is the road the film critics have been begging and praying the British industry to follow. It is a bad road, morally, socially and, in the long run, financially. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer were, in years gone by, responsible for that excellent series of shorts on "Crime Does Not Pay."

If crime does not pay (and it doesn't, except for a time, otherwise there would be no crime), why should the spreading of criminal thoughts pay? The answer is: they don't, except for a time. The Nazis have discovered that: those of them who have not taken cyanide in the burning Berlin Chancery.

If, as Mr. Speakman (exhibitor) has assured us, film critics have little immediate influence on the box-office reactions of the public, they do influence the film makers in British studios, and are even gaining a hold upon the minds of many of the American film makers, as the many trends since "Dorian Gray" have shown. It would be a miracle if twenty-five years of French worship, Shaw

worship and German worship, and the strong addiction to the pre-filmic forms of expression, had not that effect.

The French film, "L'Homme Qui Cherche la Verite," was reviewed in both *The Observer* and *The Sunday Times*, on the same day, December 24th, 1944. This is how:

Lejeune in *The Observer*:

The great Raimu in a witty little sketch of a man of substance who sets out to discover what his dependants really think of him. Small, but full of savour.

Just how full of savour is explained by Dilys Powell in *The Sunday Times*:

This film is one of those entertainments which manage to give the highest possible civilised delight by taking the lowest possible view of human nature. It belongs to a world in which all husbands are unfaithful, all wives grasping, all friends betray. Yet its cynicism is quite enchanting, and its wit sparkles so gaily that one leaves the cinema exhilarated with the world and everything it contains. Its notion of a hero, who, to learn what people really think of him, pretends to total deafness, hardly accords with English ideas of fair play. However, it is not, of course, the theme that matters (*oh, dear, no!*) but the treatment; and here the treatment has the skill of the Restoration purged of its grossness.

So you see, the more we have of enchanting cynicism or disbelief in the goodness of man, the more we have marital double-crossing, the more we have of un-English notions of unfair play, the merrier and happier we shall be. Or shall we?

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE CUMULATIVE EFFECT OF YEARS of such intellectual opinionating as we have quoted in the previous chapter was bound to have its effect upon the structure and character of the British film in time, much more so than upon the American. It could not be otherwise when you consider the conditions of protection, insularity and cliquishness encouraged by the law of Quota on the one hand and the commercial study of world consumer interest in America, on the other.

If the Continental European film never was and never could be world currency, how does Mr. Rank imagine he can sell a British film to the world when that British film is based on French, German or Italian cultural foundations? And how can anyone possibly imagine that you can obtain a healthy film, a healthy film industry, a healthy world film export and a healthy world society based on Christian Anglo-Saxon cultural leadership, if we listen to those critics who offer us "the highest possible civilised delight by taking the lowest possible view of human nature"?

Against Dilys Powell's subconscious, unthinking and unreasoning enthusiasm, read the cool, calm, lucid observation of one of our greatest men of the last or any century—Charles Darwin. Darwin wrote:

The highest possible stage in moral culture is when we recognise that we ought to control our thoughts, and not even think again the sins that made the past pleasant to us.

When you think of these words, and of the present moral poverty in British films based, as most of them are, on the French cultural tradition, and when you think of the world-wide appeal of the best American films based on the Anglo-Saxon tradition, whose line should we follow in the making of British films in the future: the Lejeune-Powell line, or the line of Darwin? With these two strongly contrasting outlooks in mind, surely it would be reasonable to suggest that the tragic French *débâcle* in 1940 had its roots in something disquietingly wrong, something deeply disintegrating and dangerous in the life of the French people. That *débâcle* is clearly visible, as in a reflecting mirror, in the French film output that our film critics praise. Where are our critics trying to lead us?

At every stage in human evolution, men have laboured to secure a

certain social solidarity, a moral and cultural unity which alone ensures survival whenever conditions become difficult. A healthy current of ideas for mutual aid, mutual respect, mutual sympathy for mutual defence is an absolute necessity. Can human beings survive in the kind of world Dilys Powell gloats over, a world in which "all husbands are unfaithful, all wives grasping, all friends betray"? What is Miss Powell describing: the actual state of Pétain France in 1940, or its mirrored reflection in the film? Which? Which of these two things afford her such ineffable exhilaration?

Darwin has also observed that:

Those communities which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members could flourish best and rear the greatest number of offspring.

Not "the survival of the fittest," which Darwin never invented, but with which he has been saddled to give the Sadist-minded intellectuals an excuse for peddling their "cosmism" and cruelty, but "the most sympathetic members could flourish best." They are the fittest to survive. They are capable of leaving the greatest number of offspring so that the community may go on, remain properly defended, and survive. They are the most capable of cohesion and unity in the face of danger. They, therefore, develop the greatest team spirit, the greatest inventive power, the greatest will-to-self-sacrifice in the interest of humanity as a whole.

What is, and for many years has been, the chief curse of contemporary France? Lack of offspring. But those who deplore the fall in the French birth-rate must realise that the *whole* of French cultural life is one, and can only be regarded as one. Sex as pleasure pure and simple, sex divorced from its real purpose, which is the replacement of the old with the birth of the new human beings to carry on the race, sex and little but sex in literature, plays and films brings with it its inevitable penalty of unutterable shame, pain and suffering. The over-stress on sex at the expense of the family virtues and the social virtues is, in literature and films, nearly always linked with the concept popularised by de Sade, that life is hardly worth while anyway, that all is frustration and cruelty here below, and we may as well be dead.

Opposed to this concept is the healthy, natural, biological impulse of sex *linked to purpose*. Not pleasure for pleasure's sake, but *pleasure plus purpose*. The real man and the real woman find their highest natural completion when they *care* for each other, instead of trying to double-cross one another. Caring for one another, in turn, evokes the natural parental instincts when the instinctive urge that brings them together brings forth the child. From the care of children there develop the social virtues of self-sacrifice, fortitude, bravery and mutual help. From the parental virtues there emerge the higher social virtues that battle for an active, positive, living Christianity, for that "do unto others as you would have others do

unto you," for that faith, hope and charity that binds us together and helps us to overcome the direst perils.

Surely the history of France and the story of Nazidom are witnesses enough to the correctness of Darwin's observation. Always throughout the ages men have appeared when the society in which they lived became decadent, who have tried to put the forward moving evolutionary impulse into reverse, who have scorned the virtues by which men have risen from the animal. These men, each in their time—Nero, Attila, Jenghiz Khan, Napoleon and Hitler—merely brought the same kind of notions of the Shavian critics in their respective epochs to the point of action. While the dissidents and cynics and philosophers only talked about disruption and destruction, the tyrants went beyond mere talk and destroyed, justifying their cruelties and perfidies by the philosophies already spread abroad in advance. This Hitler business has happened many times before, but it has never happened without first the disruptors starting to "bore from within," gradually undermining the moral structure of society. It need not happen again if we are able to detect who those "borers" are. They can then be made ridiculous and thus ineffectual.

It will pay us to note yet another passage in Darwin's work written nearly a hundred years before the age of Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin, and the peoples they have led:

Obscure as is the problem of the advance of civilisation, we can at least see that a nation which produced the greatest number of highly intellectual, energetic, brave, patriotic and benevolent men would generally prevail over less favoured nations.

Notice that point. It has a lesson for us both for the peace and for the making of British films. Benevolent men, not malevolent men, inevitably come on top in the struggle for survival. So it is that the active, positive, beneficent ideas in a given film output are bound to win the race for world supremacy. Benevolent men, young, energetic, brave and keenly intelligent men were the men of the R.A.F. who, in the Battle of Britain, sacrificed themselves against malevolent men serving a malevolent cause.

If those who take joy in the contemplation of malevolence, those peddlers of "the survival of the fittest," those followers of "the highest possible civilised delight by taking the lowest possible view of human nature," if they had been right, if all, indeed, is evil here below and there is nothing we can do about it, then Nazidom would surely have won, for Nazidom and Fascism were the only systems in our day and generation that took those malevolent ideas out of the realm of the printed word, the stage play and the film, and acted them out in the real world down to the uttermost malevolence, as depicted in "The Picture of Dorian Gray," which, it must be remembered, had been in existence in print for nearly fifty years.

Surely, then, if they had been the fittest to survive those malevolent systems would have survived. Surely also, if the French film industry, whose product our intellectuals gush over, had been of a fitter calibre than the American film industry, it, too, would have survived. Why didn't it? Why didn't the German film industry come out on top? Because malevolence disintegrates a society, it atomises and breaks asunder to make a Belsen for mankind, while the opposite of malevolence—love and affection—draws closer together and strengthens. The main strength of the American film industry lies here, while our own leanings to the French and German schools of film making is the principal source of the British industry's weakness. Love makes the world go round. One touch of laughter makes the whole world kin. Malevolence makes the world go flat; just how flat any Berliner, looking at his city, could tell you. Weep and you weep alone. Therefore the self-pity, the weeping, the anguish and the terror spread by the "Caligari" German school since 1919 all conspired to make the German film an almost exclusive article for German home consumption. Only the intellectuals abroad, led by the Lejeune school, had the fine "taste" to delight in it. As love is related to birth, so is malevolence related to barrenness and death.

The forces of malevolence in Nazidom had to be opposed by men capable of social feeling, social cohesion, the team spirit, the inventive spirit, the spirit of adventure and of self-sacrifice. Such were the men of this nation and of all the United Nations. They had to be more cohesive, more welded together, more in sympathy with one another than were the forces of Nazidom. They had to be mentally and morally, as well as physically, equipped with the power to destroy the destroyers. The negation of social life which is Nazidom had itself to be negated.

When you think of the physical helplessness we were in after Dunkirk in 1940, recall the words of Darwin when he said:

The small speed and strength of man, his want of natural weapons, are more than counterbalanced, firstly by his intellectual faculties (which have been chiefly or even exclusively gained for the benefit of the community), and secondly by his *social qualities*, which led him to give and receive aid from his fellow men.

There is a lesson in this for film makers everywhere, but more especially for our own. The *social qualities* are the qualities that get us through life. The *social qualities*, therefore, the qualities of love, family affection, and social responsibilities are the qualities to propagate in fictional films. If the tendency towards spurious intellectualism and decrepit Sadism is allowed to run its course without check, that will be the end of the film industry, the end of decent society and an end to all hope of a decent and peaceful world.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE SOPHISTICATED, THE COGNOSCENTI, the intelligentsia, or whatever they like to call themselves, have for years been castigating the American film because of its alleged low standards and because of certain "formulæ" to which the Hollywood film is always alleged to conform. Boy meets girl. Boy gets girl plus the gold. Just plain "hokum" or "ackamaraekus" is the formulised verdict of the clever ones, who ultimately find themselves wedded to the admiration of French films which, too, conform to a clearly discernible pattern or "formula," more fixed and rigid than the Hollywood product.

For many years, the knowing ones have vituperated against American films. In vain, for the mass of the people liked what they liked. These people were shown in hundreds upon hundreds of American films in the past, that happiness is not only desirable, but possible and attainable. They came away from "the pictures" with a sense of satisfied well-being. They saw on the screen that good people prospered and evil men were downed. Those who worked against the common good were either hoist with their own petard or punished by the due process of law. The theme of the devoted mother of the family fostering the virtues and condoning the frailties of her offspring, proving in a thousand ways and in thousands of stories that she is the very corner stone of the family, all this bore up and sustained countless homes where priest, minister or Christian dogma seldom penetrated.

The British people, as a whole, have always taken those who are a trifle too, too clever, with a great big pinch of salt. And for a very good reason. The whole of our memory traces (or tradition) stand four square upon the acceptance of normal men in a normal, natural, progressive moving world. In the best British thought and expression, the emphasis is always to be found on the collective aspects of living, on the family as a family and as the germ cell of the community. Not me and mine and myself alone, or "Ourselves Alone" as is the motto of peasant-minded Eire, but "The Wealth of Nations," with the emphasis on the plural, written by Adam Smith.

Not my Shakespeare or *unser* Shakespeare, but the world's Shakespeare. Not Raeism, not the cannibal notion of "blood and soil," not the German Spengler's phony *Decline of the West*, full of woe, depression and desperation, but Charles Darwin's calmly scientific and highly beneficent *Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man*.

Every forward-moving concept, every major inventive advance in manufacture, in transport and in communication, came from this tiny little island :

For why the Lord our God is good . . .
 His mercy is for ever sure,
 His truth at all times firmly stood,
 And shall from age to age endure.

However simple and unsophisticated such affirmations of belief may sound in the ears of our clever-clever ones, this is the doctrine, the living sap of Britain's progress from link to link in the living chain of countless generations. This is the message carried by our ships, our goods, our inventions, our communications to the ends of the earth. Why, the very idea of world-wide communication could only emerge from a land where Christ's command is heard—to go out into the world to bring the Gospels (literally, the good news) to all the peoples of the earth. It is no accident that a Briton invented the telephone (Graham Bell), or that Marconi developed wireless on British soil with British assistance, or that another Briton (Baird) invented television. Here we find the real clue to the conundrum about the British Commonwealth. Reading from history that civilisations perish, it has been supposed, again and again, that Britain must also go down. The logic being, since it rained yesterday it must rain today. But a new element has come upon the scene since Nero. Christian values propagated upon this soil for two thousand years have never failed to renew our civilisation whenever it has been threatened. Soon, through film and television, we shall speak, brother to brother, by putting "a girdle round the world in forty minutes," as Shakespeare's Ariel puts it.

If it has been right, practical and practicable for us to uphold the social virtues within the framework of the Christian religion, for so long, how can it suddenly be all wrong just because a few, self-esteemeed "wise" people of the Shaw type begin to "shoot off their mouths"? We're grown up, they tell us. That's all kids' stuff, they tell us, and too many of us have been eager listeners and active disciples.

The anti-religionists, the "emancipated" ones, begin by not believing in God. Then, going whole hog and hell-for-leather, they throw out the Gospels as well, the baby with the bath water. Before they know where they are, "Love thy neighbour" becomes "Love thyself." It is so easy for "Freethinkers" to travel freewheel down

hill on a bicycle. It's one glorious ride! It is so easy to whiz along with gathering momentum, with never a brake, never a thought for the social consequences. Only one's immediate pleasures and satisfactions are paramount; so different from the restrained and disciplined mental processes of the despised religionists.

This was the very stuff to give inflated egos even further cause for pompous inflation and ridiculous self-display. Christianity, in its historical development, had made gods of men. The dissidents, carrying their anti-Christianity to ridiculous and socially dangerous extremes, have succeeded in making parasites of men. Maybe this is a serious charge to bring against the so-called rationalists and so-called "historical materialists." Maybe, but in an age in which cable, telegraph, telephone, film and television has made the world our country, "mankind our brethren, and to do good our religion," who is to blame for our downhill descent without a message to the world? How is it that we have nothing to say on film or television of any constructive value, nothing to which other nations care to pay heed? How is it that, though in times of stress our message goes out to all the nations as rays of hope through the B.B.C., we close up like an oyster, with nothing more to say, as soon as the emergency passes? How is it we allow or encourage the type of film we do to serve as our ambassadors abroad? By how much is a film like "Waterloo Road" likely to send up our prestige in the eyes of the nations?

Having nothing more to say to the world, we now begin to let all sorts of other people come right in to say all kinds of things about us, mostly unpleasant and unwarranted things. We welcome them and nurse them and humour them, and endow them with fame and fortune, for the privilege of having ourselves abused and denigrated. First come the cultural ambassadors of "me and mine" "Ourselves Alone" peasant-minded and Nazi sympathising Eire. After that, we invite the French and the Germans, or their cultural blood-brothers in this country, to make films about us. We've danced to their tune, not they to ours. Small wonder, then, that when it comes to films, we have, as a nation, become so hypnotised and sleep-walking that we are hardly aware of what these people are doing to our national good name.

The film, it is vitally necessary to reiterate, is not and never can be a private medium for private satisfaction, like a book, a painting, or a sculptured model. It is essentially a medium for *social* expression and *social* satisfaction, something that can and must nourish and sustain the fundamental essence of *social* living. Film people, both makers and critics, who believe only in self and nothing but self, are maimed, decerebrated and dehydrated by the barren desert of their hearts and minds.

We have quite a few people to thank for this unlovely state of affairs. It is quite easy to see that our British films, as at present constituted, believe neither in God nor man, neither in marriage, the

family or offspring, neither in happiness nor the possibility of happiness; neither in active progress or social contentment.

Can we solve this problem? Can we cut the Gordian knot which has entangled the British film industry? Can we trace the trouble back to the germs of infection, and can we effectively inoculate ourselves against those germs? If we can accomplish this we shall be well on our way to taking a worthy place on the world's screens. Then the eager welcome which is now accorded to Britshers in person when they venture abroad will also extend to British films.

The attempt is well worth while making.

The muddied and stagnant backwater that today finds abortive expression upon celluloid in Britain derives from two principal sources. One is from the Left (left behind would sound more appropriate), who seem to be constitutionally incapable of following on, or adapting, modernising or expanding their ideas from the point that Marx and Engels had left off sixty years ago. The other is from the Right, from the æsthetes, the hedonists, the eynies and the vocal Sadists deriving from the French and German schools. Right is a good appellation for these people, too, for they are always right. Everybody is out of step except our Jock, or our Shaw, or Wilde, or Swinburne, or James Joyce, or our O'Shaugnessy.

Let us first turn our examination to the ideas of the Left. The French-German-Irish school will receive our attention later.

It is evident to most people, that Marxist philosophy acquired immense prestige with the setting up of the Soviet Union. It is a system of ideas, certain tenets of which lent themselves to practical application in a rough-and-ready sort of way in a retarded, comparatively primitive social economy, which Tsarist Russia undoubtedly was during the last stages of its existenee.

It was an outlook which was applied in practice upon a people who were mainly at the peasant cultural and mental level of our own nation at about the time of Chauveer:

When Adam delved and Eve span,
Who was then the gentleman?

This sentiment, which has had six hundred years to embed itself into our social nerve patterns and democratic institutions until we take it so much for granted that no one makes a song and dance about it, came upon the Russian people with the force of an explosion in 1917. To them it meant the last word in modernity and freedom from oppression. To them it was new, to us it was old, and the Russian Revolution helped to jog our memory a bit.

But there are other aspects of Marxist philosophy which are transient, short lived and unscientific. These aspects were propounded and fixed upon paper and imbibed for close upon a hundred years. And a hundred years of growth and accretion upon the minds of thousands of adherents cannot be easily negated by the most detached and coldly objective method of comparative science.

In the course of a hundred years, the Left and the Right have gradually fused and become one, and we see this tendency reach its ultimate personification in the person of Shaw, who is, at one and the same time, a graduate of the Marxian-Fabian school of the Left and a hedonist Romantic of the Right.

The main difference between the Marxists of the Soviet Union and our own is that the former have been compelled to fit the theory to the fact—in most cases, not in all—while our own Leftists not only reversed the process, but have hardly moved away from the theory as it was solemnly fixed and laid down from 1848 to 1883. It is significant that the Association of Ciné Technicians is largely influenced in their social ideas by Marxist philosophy. It is even more significant that the Association is presided over by Mr. Anthony Asquith of "Fanny By Gaslight" fame. Mr. Asquith's father was once Prime Minister of England, which makes the post of President of the Association of Ciné Technicians particularly intriguing.

Let us then start our investigation by taking a general viewpoint on the sex problem first, so that we may then narrow down the search to discover the main sources of those ideas on sex and family which colour our present British film output and which are handicapping our film export trade.

Because marriage and the bringing up of children is the focal point in the development of the social instincts, any deterioration in the social instincts will nearly always express itself in a loosening of the family bonds. The one group of instincts is inextricably linked to the other and a deterioration in the one effects a deterioration of the other. This can be seen not only among individuals, but also in the career of nations. The state of mind of a people (that is of the overwhelming majority of a nation) on the question of family relationships and responsibilities, is invariably crystallised in the type of leadership that that nation will tend to bring to the top.

Economic trouble was not the only trouble in pre-Hitler Germany, as our Marxists would have it. Not by a long, long way. The moral dissolution in Germany, the almost complete lack of restraint in sex matters that was encouraged under the spurious label of Democratic liberalism by the soft-brained Social Democrat Government of Germany, helped to pave the way for a further downward slide into the moral abyss, until the German nation came to be represented in its leadership by men like Hitler, who himself was utterly bereft of social feeling, who had no family and wanted none, who did not even appear to possess the primal healthy sex instincts, and who threw himself on the floor to bite the carpet during his many paroxysms of nervous tension. All these Hitlerian characteristics are related and interconnected. If one of them appears, other co-related manifestations are sure to be found sooner or later.

Goering, of the *Lustcafé*, was forced into marrying his actress

wife for the sake of appearances, and the extra-marital adventures of Dr. Goebbels were known all round the world for years.

The Italian nation was not quite so far gone into decay as the Germans. Mussolini, a married man with grown sons and a daughter, nevertheless had the same wayward inclinations as Dr. Goebbels, but the force of public opinion imposed upon Mussolini the need to be a little more circumspect. There was a scandal concerning a woman who left Mussolini's Italy for Paris some years before the war. There have been others before Clara Petacci, who died with him.

It is not necessary for one hundred per cent. of a nation to go wrong on family and sex relationships before it deserves a Hitler or a Mussolini as its leader. It is sufficient if even half the population in a given society is imbued with loose ideas on sex and family. If this half, even for a short period, exerts its influence in a preponderating measure, then the leadership of that nation as a whole will take its character from the effect of this adverse tipping of the scale.

It will be noticed that in the same way as the leaders of the Axis powers represented in their own persons the quintessential character of parental, family and social ties in disruption, so we find that at the head of the United Nations were men who lived natural lives and who shared the normal human joys as well as the responsibilities of family ties. One thinks of the Royal Family, Mr. and Mrs. Churchill and family. The late President and Mrs. Roosevelt and their family. Of Marshal Stalin's private life, little is known. It is a convention in Soviet Russia that the private and family affairs of leading public figures are supposed to have no connection with public matters.

While this may be so to a point, and while the publicising of the family of a national figure may sometimes be carried to extremes, the Soviet practice of keeping dead silence on such things is carrying it rather to the opposite extreme.

It is commonly accepted that Hitler and the Nazi State represented everything that was opposed to life and liberty. Instead of life, the emphasis was on death, instead of liberty there was confinement and restriction both of body and mind, instead of the pursuit of happiness there was a deeply perverted pathological urge towards unhappiness and making others unhappy.

The Nazis assigned the position of women to the status of breeding machines. Mating and breeding were encouraged without restraint or moral check, especially among the Hitler Youth. The human joys of fatherhood and motherhood were ignored, and only the temporary satisfactions common to animals low in the evolutionary scale were fostered. The comfort of a natural home, the tenderness of a mother, the protection and guidance of a father, all inviolable spiritual and physical needs to which every child is entitled, were also denied to the child. Barrack-like institutional nursery-factories were considered good enough to be brought up in

for children brought into the world by stud-farm methods.

Now at the risk of administering a terrible shock to some of our unthinking intellectuals, we must say here that part of the justification for some of these practices of the Nazis may be found written by a famous author in the year 1884. That he was a German and a close associate and friend of Karl Marx was hardly an accident, in the light of ideological developments in Germany since. That book is one of the keys which opens the main gate towards an understanding of the hidden cultural influences which determine that our present British films are as they are—unworthy of our nationhood and prestige, and entirely unacceptable by a vast waiting patronage overseas, who would otherwise be only too eager to accept our product.

That book is *The Origin of the Family*, by Friedrich Engels. The prestige of Engels is such that, though the book was published in England in 1884, it is solemnly reprinted and broadcast in Moscow in many thousands of copies with hardly a modification. But let us hasten at once to add that to the credit of the Russian people and the Russian State, *not a word of notice is taken of this book in actual social practice*. It is read, but not practiced. Whether this will continue into the future, it is difficult to say. But it is a fact that at present Engels on the family is a dead-letter in Russia—in real life.

In actual practice, in actual social experience, the Soviets have discovered that continence is at the base of social stability, that the family and the sense of sustained responsibility which is fostered within the family, is the keystone of social responsibility and therefore the driving force of a progressive society. The Soviets realised long ago that sexual looseness of any kind can only lead to social disintegration and even worse, as Germany has since shown.

Nobody, not a soul in Russia today, believes with Engels that the family is peculiarly a *bourgeois* invention. Life itself and nature, and the whole weight of actual, objective, social experience has demonstrated to the Russians that the label is downright misleading. The Russians have been given the historical opportunity of holding Engels' book with one hand and checking it with life with the other, feeling their way through the maze of a new social system in construction. To the Left Wing Labourites, Fabians and Shavians, and film making intellectuals, that opportunity has, so far, been denied.

And it is among the latter, for whom objective experience in the real world seems to count for less than the halo around Marx's collaborator, that we find Engels' work producing the most lamentable results.

A theory is valid only if it works. If Engels' theory of the origin of the family does not work under test in the Soviet Union, it cannot have been a right theory when it was first promulgated. That being so, any group of people still under the spell of Engels' theory will

follow the wrong practice, and if the members of this large minority are intellectual leaders of influence, they are bound to create a disintegrating effect upon society. Much of the loose thought and behaviour on sex morals and social morals in our films can thus be traced, right back through the various Left Wing "progressive" movements of the last sixty years, to Engels' *The Origin of the Family*.

If, in 1884, a seed is planted in the minds of men, a seed which has all the outward camouflage of having sprung from the Tree of Science, a seed with the notion that the family is but a burdensome invention of an oppressive capitalist society, and if, as Marx and Engels prognosticated, capitalist society is destined for dissolution, then it would seem right to start dissolving that society at its most vulnerable point, by deriding the institution of the family and proclaiming the inalienable right of everyone to do as he or she pleases in sex matters.

This is one of the few activities in which it is easy for the advocates to practice what they preach. "Let's all have a good time," is an advocacy for which there is little difficulty in finding adherents, but there is another and far more ominous side to this apparently attractive medal, ominous even for the Leftists.

If, in 1884, the process of social disruption at the point of sex and the family is given a powerful impetus, first by Engels' precept and then by example of many of Engels' followers who agree with his precept, and if all this in turn lets loose a flood of literature on the topic until sexual profligacy becomes a European wide cult, then what guarantee have we that the process of dissolution will stop at the boundaries of capitalist society? An epidemic is no respecter of persons or societies. What guarantee is there that the harbingers and torch-bearers of some future post-capitalist society will themselves escape from the dissolution and destruction implied in their agitation? Those who dabble in pitch cannot remain undefiled.

Granted that certain aspects of our society in 1884, especially as they affected the workers, were quite intolerable. Granted that Marx and Engels had some reasons to feel despairing and despondent as they looked around at the condition of the workers, nevertheless events in Europe have since taught us this lesson: that once you start undermining existing society at the point of the family, the process will go on like a snowball, until society itself collapses about your ears, burying everyone—capitalists, landlords, middle-men, workers, peasants, Conservatives, Liberals, Socialists and Communists, beneath a mountainous, all-enveloping destructive avalanche.

Before 1914, Germany had a powerful trade union and working class movement, greatly influenced, if not exactly entirely ruled, by the ideas of Marx and Engels. When the war ended in 1918, the Social Democrats were the Party in power until the advent of Hitler. What were the ruling ideas that dominated that Party? Is it conceivable that if those ideas had been balanced and sound, and had

been followed by balanced and sound action, these Social Democratic leaders would have lost the power and fallen as victims to the Nazis as they have done since?

The Soviet Russian leaders, are firm adherents of Marx and Engels, but for reasons that would take too long to elaborate here, and unlike the sleep-walking Weimar leaders, who tolerated every form of sexual license, and who carried their woolly-headed notions of "freedom" to the point of allowing the Junkers *liberty* to commit political murder with impunity, and freedom to organise the overthrow of Weimar rule, the Russian Soviet leaders encouraged family life, visited the severest penalties upon members of the Communist Party who showed unreliability or irresponsibility in their private lives, elevated the dignity of womanhood, sought to provide everyone with a job and a purpose. And all this happened despite, and in total contradiction, of the message contained in Engels on the family, as we shall show.

The full title of Engels' book, of which the latest edition was published in this country by Lawrence and Wishart is: *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, in the light of the researches of Lewis H. Morgan*. Who was Lewis H. Morgan? Morgan was an anthropological research worker who completed a book which was published in 1877 under the title: *Ancient Society, or the Lines of Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilisation*.

Yes, but why does Engels pick on Morgan? True, Morgan did research lasting over forty years, on the customs of the Iroquois Indians of North America. But why does Engels imagine that from a work which claims nothing more than that it is a survey of "from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilisation," he can form a thesis to explain the *origin* of the family? "Origin" means the first existence of a thing, its very first beginning.

The known story of man as a distinctly man-like creature is reckoned at two million years. If we take the figure one hundred as a measure, then the Iroquois Indians represent a stage in human evolution when the human race had already passed ninety-nine parts of the way to its present status. The hundredth part represents the ten thousand years or more of all the known phases of Etruscan, Egyptian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Greek, Roman and present-day Christian civilisation.

Ignoring ninety-nine parts of man's evolutionary progress, Engels takes family and tribal relationships at the stage of the Iroquois Indians as his cue and starting point, purports to find analogous marriage customs in Greek and Roman civilisation, and serves up the whole thing as the *origin* of the family!

But the most staggering single fact about *The Origin of the Family* is, that when it was being written, Engels had available, had he cared to make use of them, the results of the objective researches of the greatest school of biology and anthropology the world has

ever known, either before or since—the British school of Darwin, Lubbock (Lord Avebury), Spencer and Tyler. These men were contemporary with Engels, and their work could not have been unknown to him, yet, believe it or not, Engels never quotes a single sentence of the writings of any single one of them in support of his thesis. Not one of these most careful and conscientious workers is even mentioned by name in the body of Engels' work. Only seven years later, in 1891, in a preface to the fourth edition of *The Origin of the Family*, does Engels mention Darwin, Tyler and Lubbock, and then only once in each case.

Of Darwin, he writes :

This discovery of the primitive matriarchal gens (clans) . . . has the same importance for anthropology as Darwin's theory of evolution has for biology.

That's the lot about Darwin. But surely Darwin wrote, besides *The Origin of Species*, that great anthropological study, *The Descent of Man*. Surely if there had been anything in Darwin to support Engels' case, Engels would have grasped the opportunity with both hands. Why didn't he? Why is Darwin completely ignored?

Of E. B. Tyler, the following is the only mention :

. . . these facts (concerning group marriage) were indeed known and fresh instances of them were continually being collected. But nobody knew what to do with them, and even as late as E. B. Tyler's *Researches into the Early History of Mankind* (1865) they are listed as mere "curious customs . . ."

That is all about Tyler. But in 1881, three years before the first edition of Engels' "Origin," there was published Tyler's monumental two-volume "Anthropology." Why is there never a single sentence in Engels' book to indicate even the existence of that work?

The only two references to Sir John Lubbock (later Lord Avebury) are the following :

. . . and Lubbock [*The Origin of Civilisation* (1870)] recognised this group marriage as a historical fact.

Compare, for example, Giraud-Teulon's *Origines de la Famille* (1874) and even Lubbock's *Origin of Civilisation* (1882).

That is all about Lubbock.

Here is something else, just as curious. Engels takes up a considerable part of his book in trying to explain the tribal and social organisation of ancient Rome, its marriage customs and rites, and its property relationships. And again, just as the leading Englishmen in anthropology are ignored, so does the leading classic author of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, the Englishman Edward Gibbon, remain unmentioned.

Gibbon had spent a lifetime studying the subject at its sources. He knew Arabic, Latin, Greek. He went direct to the original records, monuments and medals; could read them, annotate them, classify them and draw a vivid picture of the movement of Roman history by employing the scientific method of comparing objective data, relying very little on subjective speculation. Gibbon's is certainly one of the most comprehensive historical works on Rome that has ever appeared. It has been a classic work of reference to scholars ever since it was first published, but Engels ignores it. Tacitus, upon whom Engels relies mostly, is an important witness, but Tacitus can only give a small part of the picture. Gibbon, on the other hand, offers one a splendid bird's eye view of the panorama of Roman history.

The traditional method of approach to any problem in Britain has been—and still is—by careful, if sometimes slow, testing by trial and error, by giving thought but not making thought an aim, by thought *plus* action, *plus* verification in the real world. The great men of learning and science in this country have invariably employed their activities for the benefit of mankind. By the dissemination of knowledge they sought to make things better for everybody. Speculation without purposive verification in objective reality is quite foreign to the Anglo-Saxon mind. On the other hand, abstruse philosophy, speculation or "divination," attempting to prove a proposition by formal logic, attempting to explain the world by the sheerest mental or verbal aerobatics, such methods have found greater favour and following among the Continental Europeans, more especially among the Germans.

Would it be unfair to suggest, with all diffidence, that Engels ignored the English research workers and scientists, and embraced the German writers and philosophers, because he himself was quite out of sympathy with the Anglo-Saxon methods of objective science? Let the facts speak for themselves. In Roman history, instead of drawing upon the abundance and scholarship of Edward Gibbon, Gibbon is ignored in favour of Mommsen, who, as anyone can see for himself, is favoured with long quotations from his work in Engels' book.

In anthropology, instead of drawing upon the meticulously careful and scrupulously scientific work of Darwin—Darwin is ignored in favour of Bachofen. Bachofen, the mystic—Bachofen, the obscure—but German! Bachofen, indeed, as can be verified by the index at the end of Engels' book, receives no fewer than eleven mentions. Ignoring the whole of the British school of anthropology, Engels, nevertheless, hunts up every obscure Continental European he can lay his hands on, invoking the dubious authority of Fourier, Heusler, Moschus, Schöemann, Waehsmuth and von Eseenbach to support his case.

And what is Engels' case? What is it that repels him from the British school and draws him to the Continental Europeans? Is

Is there anyone so bold as to suggest that the British, with the facilities that the Empire afforded of studying mankind at so many different stages of development at first hand, were less to be relied upon than the Europeans? What is the explanation? Well, let Engels himself explain why he prefers Bachofen to Darwin. This is what he writes in his second preface to his *Origin of the Family*:

The history of the family dates from 1861, from the publication of Bachofen's *Mutterrecht* (Mother Right or Mother Law). In this work the author advances the following propositions:

(1) That originally man lived in a state of sexual promiscuity. (Our italics.)

(2) That such promiscuity excludes any certainty of paternity, and that descent could therefore be reckoned only in the female line, according to mother right, and that this was originally the case amongst all the people of antiquity.

(3) That since women, as mothers, were the only parents that were known with certainty, they held a position of such high respect and honour that it became the foundation, in Bachofen's conception of a regular rule of women (Gynæocracy).

(4) That the transition to monogamy, where the woman belonged to one man exclusively, involved a violation of a primitive religious law (i.e., actually a violation of the traditional right of the other men to this woman), and that in order to expiate this violation, or to purchase indulgence for it, the woman had to surrender herself for a limited period."

Now we have it. Now we have stalked the quarry to its lair. Now we know the reason for Engels' preference for Bachofen instead of Darwin, or Tyler, or Lubbock, or Spencer. "Originally man lived in a state of sexual promiscuity." That's it! Bachofen and every one of the Continentals whom Engels calls to his aid support the idea of the alleged polygamous nature of man, and "sexual promiscuity" as the "natural" order of things, from which there was supposed to have been a "transition to monogamy." The suggestion is skilfully worked up in the mind of the reader that monogamy, the marriage of one man to one woman, is some kind of sinister, artificial invention which came into being as a "transition" towards a more developed property system than that which existed when men were supposed to have been as promiscuous as they liked.

The fantastic lengths to which Engels has gone to sustain the equally fantastic notion of man's alleged *original* promiscuity may be noted in this, that in the very next paragraph to the one quoted above, Engels, while patting Bachofen on the back for his "great discovery," takes Bachofen to task for being a religious mystic! He writes:

Thus, according to Bachofen, it is not the development of men's actual conditions of life, but the religious reflections of these conditions inside their heads, which has brought about the changes in the social position of the sexes to each other.

In this criticism of Bachofen, Engels commits himself to the idea that there are "men's actual conditions of life," on the one hand, and "the religious reflections of these conditions inside their heads," on the other. According to Engels, religious ideas are but photographic imprints of men's actual conditions, but if Engels were alive today, we could show him that "the actual conditions of life" of the Japanese were modern, up to date, and organised on a vast industrial and technological basis, but that those "actual conditions" had not had the faintest influence on the "religious reflections" inside Japanese heads just before their defeat. On the contrary, the religious ideas of the Japanese and the ethics that go with those ideas were almost exactly as they were two thousand years ago, in the earliest days of Japanese barbarism, sun god origins, harakiri, and all the rest of the rag bag.

We could show Engels, were he alive today, that exactly similar industrial and technological "conditions of life" in Nazi Germany were to be found side by side with early tribal German notions of self-sufficiency, tribal ideas of superiority over others, primitive ideas of cruel and senseless vengeance on innocent victims, a mythological religion of race, blood and soil, and a system of sexual ethics quite in keeping with pre-tribal, degenerate, throw-back practices. And again, as in Japan, these "ideas" were far more capable of being enforced than they were in the heyday of the German Gothic tribes, because of the tremendous increase in power that an industrial economy affords.

Everything that Engels wrote in his *Origin of the Family* makes it crystal clear that he had nothing in his armoury with which he could have forecast the possible emergency of Nazi Germany or modern Japan. Engels may have been innocent of any intention to mislead, but why do his present-day followers, with the recent example of Nazi Germany and Italy, still hold with Engels that "conditions" automatically and without further ado produce the corresponding "reflections in men's heads"? Surely they ought to know, if Engels did not, "religious reflections" or ideas are not always the exact photographic images of "conditions."

But let us follow Engels' extraordinary hacking of the obscure and obseurant Bachofen further. After praising Bachofen for having allegedly traced "heterism" or prostitution to monogamy in ancient Greece, and after praising Bachofen's interpretation of Aeschylus' *Oreistas* in support of his (Bachofen's) ideas on Greek marriage customs, Engels says:

This (Bachofen's) new, but undoubtedly correct, interpretation of the *Oreistas* is one of the best and finest passages in

the whole book, but it proves at the same time that Bachofen believes at least as much as Aeschylus did, in the Furies, Apollo and Athena; for, at bottom, he believes that the overthrow of mother-right by father-right was a miracle wrought during the Greek heroic age by these divinities. That such a conception, which makes religion the lever of world history, must finally end in pure mysticism, is clear. It is, therefore, a tough and by no means always a grateful task to plough through Bachofen's solid tome. *But all that does not lessen his importance as a pioneer.* (Our italics).

Engels thus places himself in the unenviable position of drawing most of his notions on sexual promiscuity from a woolly-headed mystic who really believed in the factual existence of the Furies, Apollo and Athena, and that these divinities could perform miracles! Bachofen believes this, Bachofen, whose thought processes correspond to the level of the earliest dayn of human tribal speculation; is by no means alone among Germans who have been mentally afflicted in the same way. Many names occur to mind at random, but one of the most prominent was General Ludendorff, who, after losing the war for Germany in 1918, fell, in later years, to the worship of Wotan and Thor, and introduced these German tribal gods to fortify Hitler and his Nazi movement in its progression to power.

This same Bachofen is accepted by Engels as one of his chief authorities on early marriage. Bachofen instead of Darwin. Bachofen in place of E. B. Tyler. Bachofen in place of Lord Avebury. Bachofen against the whole British school of objective, scientific anthropology, whose worst enemy has never accused it of the slightest trace of obscurant mysticism.

But if Bachofen was wrong about the factual existence of the Furies and Apollo, how could he be right about early Greek marriage customs, or the conclusions he draws from his "discoveries"? Is it wise to found a philosophy of sex behaviour and social ethics for a wished for post-capitalist society with Bachofen and other German and French obscurants as the chief supports for that philosophy? If Engels had written his book merely for his own amusement, very little harm would have been done, but alas, it has influenced the thought and conduct of generations of Left Wing followers and other intellectual leaders all over Europe, with the direst results.

In the one country in which Engels' precepts were taken at their face value by the civil authorities, in Soviet Russia, where the notion of the polygamous nature of man was put to the stern test of objective social experience, the idea has shown itself to be ludicrous in the extreme, impracticable, unnatural, anti-social and destructive. The Russians have firmly rejected Engels in practice, but they continue to publish Engels for reading, thus unwittingly undermining

the morals of their own people and poisoning the minds of the intellectuals abroad.

Not only does Engels follow the scientifically unsound method of making a special selection of those "authorities" who happen to feed his own special view, but he does two other things that are scientifically wrong :

- (a) He takes one aspect, one characteristic of man's historical evolution—sexual promiscuity—and stretches it to infinity, into the remotest past and towards the distant future, and
- (b) He makes the most strenuous efforts on almost every page to prove promiscuity as "natural" to man, by the cleverest verbal juggling, by formal, academic logic.

That method is one by which you can prove almost anything, because by that method you confine yourself to what goes on in your own head, without reference to a careful checking up, point by point, of the things that happen in the outer world. Here is a quotation from Engels' book which forms a neat epitome of the method and outlook Engles employs throughout :

Lately, it has become fashionable to deny the existence of this initial stage in human sexual life (i.e., promiscuity). Humanity must be spared this "shame." It is pointed out that all direct proof of such a stage is lacking, and particular appeal is made to the evidence from the rest of the animal world; for, even among animals, according to the numerous facts collected by Letourneau (*Evolution du mariage et de la famille*), complete promiscuity in sexual intercourse marks a low stage of development. But the only conclusions I can draw from all these facts, as far as man and his primitive conditions of life are concerned, is that they prove nothing whatever. That vertebrates mate together for a considerable period is sufficiently explained by physiological causes—in the case of birds, for example, by the female's need of help during the brooding season; examples of faithful monogamy amongst birds prove nothing about man, for the simple reason that men are not descended from birds.

And if strict monogamy is the height of all virtue, then the palm must go to the tapeworm, which has a complete set of male and female sexual organs in each of its 50-200 proglottides, or sections, and spends its whole life copulating in all its sections with itself. (Our italics.)

Confining ourselves to mammals, however, we find all forms of sexual life—promiscuity, indications of group marriage, polygyny, monogamy. Polyandry alone is lacking—it took human beings to achieve that. Even our nearest relations, the quadrupeds, exhibit every possible variation in the grouping

of males and females; and if we narrow it down still more and consider only the four anthropoid apes, all that Letourneau has to say about them is that they are sometimes monogamous, sometimes polygamous . . .

You will notice how Engels remains true to his unscientific and subjective habit of picking out *one aspect* of marriage and extending it to cover a combination of aspects. When Engels speaks of marriage or mating, he regards it not as you or I understand it, but from one standpoint only—the sex act. To Engels' mind that alone is the *only* feature of marriage, else he would not have drawn attention to that incredibly, crudely German illustration of the sex habits of the tapeworm in order to call it "monogamy." To descend to that level of argument, to attempt to explain the highest in nature, man, by reference to the lowest, to a creature that thrives parasitically inside living beings, a creature which has probably remained stagnant at that stage for hundreds of millions of years, that truly is worthy of German philosophic anthropology.

Engels, however, does appear to be dimly aware that monogamy might conceivably imply something more than just the sex act, as when he refers to birds and the "female's need of help during the brooding season." He says, flippantly, that "examples of faithful monogamy amongst birds prove nothing about man, for the simple reason that men are not descended from birds." But if Engels had taken the trouble to study the subject with the same meticulous disinterestedness which our own scientists exercised in Victorian days, he would have known that if you go back far enough in geological time, it becomes evident that both birds and men evolved from a common ancestor, and that each developed along two main separate branches of the same evolutionary tree.

And though birds and men differ, and though one is not descended *directly* from the other, both birds and men are subject to the same physical laws, both have to eat of the fruits of the earth, both have to procreate to continue their kind, both have to exercise a high degree of concern for their young, both possess highly developed parental instincts, else both birds and men would have disappeared off the earth long ages ago.

The bird is by far the nearer to its primordial ancestor, the snake; for, like the snake, it lays eggs, instead of giving birth to young like the mammal. The bird, however, unlike the snake, could no longer trust to luck or the heat of the sun for the eggs to hatch. There were too many enemies on the ground, so safety was sought in flight and homes had to be built in trees. The weather was getting cold, too, so the nests had to be made warm and cosy, both for the protection of the parents and the warmth necessary for the hatching of the eggs. When the young hatched out, frail and helpless, unable to fly or to feed themselves, the parents had to continue to provide for their young until they could fend for themselves.

It seems reasonably certain that this elaborate business of flying,

nest building, hatching and provision for offspring, could never have evolved as a one-bird job. In the interests of survival, both for the individual and the species, the parental instinct would have had to be as firmly implanted in the male as in the female, so that both could co-operate in this necessary task. Thus, monogamy, or mating for life, would be the simplest and most satisfactory arrangement to achieve this end. It is clear that the monogamous instinct was not something separately thought out and adopted arbitrarily, but that it developed integrally, side by side with the hereditary habit or instinct of flying, hopping, nest building, hatching and feeding the young.

Now what does Engels say about all these duties that the male bird performs equally with the female in the interests of their progeny and the survival of the species? *Not one single word*. And about the *instinctive* relationships between human parents and their children? *Not one single word in the entire length of Engels' book*. Whether, in discussing the family of the past, present or future, whether it is the family in savage, barbarian or civilised times, in the classic days of Greece and Rome, or during contemporary times, the notion of children, parental instincts or duties towards children, never once enters the orbit of Engels' consciousness. As in Shaw's plays and current British films—no children!

On no single page does Engels display a glimmer of awareness that mating or marriage, at least among the higher creatures, involves duties as well as privileges, the burden of caring for the preservation of your kind, as well as merely pursuing the pleasures of a momentary embrace. On the contrary, to Engels, promiscuity is the great thing, *the idée fixe*, the only thing worth talking about. Mating is the sex act and the sex act alone, and sex is a matter of pleasure, pure and simple. In this there is not a pin to choose between Engels and the German and French advocates of pleasure for pleasure's sake.

In the passage on page 90 in which he envisages the future sex relationships in a non-capitalist society, when men and women will be economically free, a woman will be able to "give herself" from no other consideration except love.

And then; we quote:

When these people are in the world, they will care precious little what anybody today thinks they ought to do; they will make their own practice and their corresponding public opinion about the practice of each individual—and that will be the end of it.

And a good time will be had by all! Yes, but will there be any children of these unions? If so, what is to become of them? Who is to look after their feeding, training and education? Who is to offer the child what it instinctively needs as much as the material things—tenderness and affection? *Not one word in the whole book*.

Engels' silence on this point is eloquent and complete. That's Engels' idea of a discussion on "the family"! And how does the idea square with practice in the Soviet Union? Any member of the Communist Party found "making their own practice" in matters of sex, and ignoring "public opinion" is flung out of the Party, neck and crop. That's how!

Nobody will deny that pleasure is included in the exercise of the reproductive instincts, or that the sex act is a most important aspect of the mating or marrying habits of animal, bird and man. But to make out the sex act to be *the one, the only* aspect of marriage, to ignore the parental instincts that have grown out of the sex impulse, and to ignore the social instincts which are a further outgrowth of the parental instincts, is about as reasonable as affirming that living is breathing and nothing but breathing, or that living is eating and nothing but eating, or that it means drinking liquids and nothing else, or circulating the blood through the body and nothing else.

In fact, of course, living is an intricate, inter-dependent, cyclical combination of all these, and a great many other activities. But if, in your special brand of physiology, you stretch any one of these activities to inordinate lengths, if by an over-emphasis on one aspect you exclude or obscure all other aspects out of proportion, and if you rule your conduct of life on such an outlook, you are bound to land in mental confusion. And that is precisely where the one-eyed stress on promiscuity has helped to land the peoples of Europe.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

ENGELS, OF COURSE, could not avoid mentioning children altogether, but the extraordinary thing is that he only makes five references to children in his long treatise, *and every one of these mentions is negative*. The first, on page 41, is on children's identification, thus:

In all forms of group family it is uncertain who is the father of a child; but it is certain who its mother is.

The second, on page 49, is a reference to the *separation of children from their parents* in the event of a divorce among the Iroquois Indians. The third reference, on page 148, is a mention of children, but again in connection with divorce among the Celts of Ireland and Wales in the eleventh century.

The fourth is on page 123 on *the sale of children* in Athens, in 600 B.C.:

. . . the debtor, in order to meet his creditor's claims, had to sell his children into slavery abroad. Children sold by their father—this was the first fruits of father-right and monogamy! (Engels' exclamation mark.)

And finally, the fifth reference, on page 171, is about parents who sold their children into slavery under Roman rule.

That is all—absolutely everything about children.

You would think, from reading Engels on the family, that children have always been either objects to be separated from, or argued about by divorce-seeking parents or sold into slavery. If, in the course of these thousands of years, children have been treasured, fondled, nurtured, played with occasionally, dandled on the knee, fed, clothed, shod, educated and trained, first by the parents then by the community, Engels had apparently never heard of it!

Thus, in focusing his attention upon the *negative* and ignoring the *positive* concerning children, Engels deliberately ignores his own philosophy, developed through many tomes by himself and Marx, that life and all phenomena is "a unity of opposites." If Engels had not been so desperately anxious to "prove" sexual promiscuity and give his blessing to it, he might have had time to remember his own philosophy about the co-existence of opposites, the negative and positive side by side.

A little sober thought, and even plain common sense, would have shown that though there may have been a period of sexual promiscuity from which there was a "transition to monogamy," group marriage itself must, even argued from Engels' own philosophy, have been a transition *from* monogamy, a preceding monogamy.

If, in the age-long history of mankind, there were occasional periods when children were not so well cared for, or when the sale of children was common, then undoubtedly this is the negative phase, the opposite of tenderness, kindness, nurture, and care of children, which has been just as unmistakable a characteristic of human historical development. It must be obvious to anyone that without the exercise of the tender emotions, the other faculties of get-togetherness could never have come into play and the higher civilisations could not possibly have come into existence. Certainly high civilisations are known to have risen and have then declined and disappeared, and the downward curve is usually co-incident with the increase of the negative aspects—cruelty, Sadism, irresponsibility to one's children or one's fellows, and all the monstrous symptoms with which the exit of the Axis has made us familiar. In the course of evolution, both the negative and positive develop together, but very often, as happened in the case of Germany and Italy, the negative assumes a dominant but temporary position.

Such a negative aspect was the sale of children under Roman rule to which Engels refers. The same negative exists among the poorer parents of Japan, who sell their children into something akin to slavery at this very day. But to write a book on the "origin" of the family and to dwell *only* upon the negative relationships during certain negative periods in human social evolution, is to make utter nonsense of that very philosophy that Engels, with his colleague Marx, had sought for years to establish.

With every negative there is, and always has been, a positive. Engels, however, in his book on the family, insists upon making sexual promiscuity the normal and the accepted and the "original" form of married life, while monogamy he takes to be an artificial intrusion. The whole weight of common experience, as well as all history and anthropology shows him to be wrong. The negative is, to Engels' mind, the positive, and the real positive has no place in his philosophy at all, as his virtual ignoring of children in the discussion shows.

We see now, even if we have had to travel a long way to reach it, at least one of the sources of the current fashion of despising the family virtues in our films, and the addiction to "dollop of mother love" as contemptuous expressions in current film criticism, not to mention "ackamarackus" and "palsy-walsy."

Another thing that will be noted with interest is that the human cerebral activity called philosophy, even if it is dubbed "materialist," is not only difficult to understand by the multitude, because so terribly abstruse, but it is not even clear to the minds of

those who are its leading propounders. If a philosophy is difficult to understand and practice by the chief exponents of that philosophy, it is bound to work out wrong in every day work-a-day practice. We find, therefore, that Engels' thesis on sexual promiscuity does not, and cannot, work in a sane society. The only society in which that notion does "work," and then only temporarily, is in a society which is all set for disappearance—as the story of the Axis has shown.

In the Soviet Union, the country in which the State publishing house reverently issues Engels' works and distributes hundreds of thousands of copies of *The Origin of the Family* among the population, in that country both official and public opinion reject sexual promiscuity with the utmost scorn and disgust. The Russians have discovered, *under actual working social conditions*, that sexual inconstancy or irresponsibility has its inevitable counterpart in political unreliability. They have seen that a man who is settled in his sex and family life, and is imbued with the feelings of a husband and a father, is one who can extend that sense of responsibility to wife and children into wider spheres of social work and responsibility. They have seen that the gallant who fills his mind with ideas of cutting a dash with the ladies has little mind to concern himself with matters that affect the common social good. A person who places his own whims and pleasures before the communal interest also sets a bad example to his fellows. A man who deceives his wife can hardly be expected to be altogether honest in his relations with other men.

All this is extremely well known to the Russian people and to the Russian State, the State that prints, distributes and reads—but does not practice—Engels on the family!

How long is that absurd contradiction likely to last? That problem is one for the Russians themselves to solve and to dissolve. We, too, have our own business to attend to, and that is to trace our cultural and filmic infection to its source, or to its more than one source, and stem the plague where it started. The negative task must be a preliminary before we can start upon our positive job of establishing a worth-while film output worthy of our nation and worthy of sale abroad.

Engels has been, and still is, a considerable factor upon the minds of the intelligentsia, both in this country and in Russia, and in both countries his influence upon State-protected film making is clearly to be seen. His influence in Germany and in France has been even more than considerable. The aim now must be to see that it is nullified.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

IN THE PRECEDING CHAPTER we described the source and fount of that Left Wing cynicism, which, leaning mainly on French and German cultural foundations, colours and dominates the views on sex and family that now find their expression in current British film output. There are, of course, other influences, but the unscientific adumbrations of Engels are most certainly one of the main roots of this cult, a cult which in a slightly different form has also flourished in the Soviet Union.

There are signs that even in the United States the skeleton hand of intellectual decadence has sought a hold on American film production. Until about 1938 American producers met in open competition under the watchful eye of Hays, to gain the support of the ordinary man and his wife. Today, however, the world-wide decay has affected American films too.

Under State protection, as in Britain and the Soviet Union, the sometimes secret, sometimes open followers of the unscientific Engels can use the screen upon which to display their sub-conscious longings, polygamy, promiscuity and anti-sociality. In the Soviet Union, where the film industry is under complete State control, the literateurs and the intelligentsia have a wonderful time, often putting upon the screen such things as are only appropriate and socially permissible in books, but not on films. The tenets of Engels may be solemnly printed and distributed as books, but as active forms of human behaviour shown in action they can have the most dire social consequences.

The authorities, both in Britain and the Soviet Union, are uneasily aware of these things. But in both countries public opinion has not yet reached that point in the social consciousness which translates thought into action, in this matter. So the merry game of undermining the social and moral foundations of society goes on both here and in Russia.

The history of the United States is that of a fast evolving, objective thinking, expanding civilisation based on Anglo-Saxondom and the Christian religion. The United States has its deepest cultural roots in the soil of this, our island. The history of Continental

Europe, with its long, slow and often bitter development, with the enormous prestige built up over the slow centuries that has been conferred upon philosophers, cynics and agnostics (especially those with Germanic and French cultural allegiances) has contributed quite a bit to the chaotic mental state in which the European Continent now finds itself.

The United Nations are trying to clear up the mess, but if we are to do it effectively, we must understand what is wrong with our own social mental processes as reflected in our film output. We shall also have to understand how the Russians think, how their thought processes are being translated into film, and how those thoughts are likely to translate into future action.

Just as the cult of Engels on sex and family has left its mark upon our cultural leaders, so it has upon those of the Soviet Union, only more so. Those attitudes of mind are given State protection in Russian films for the same reasons that the wrong attitudes are condoned in British films by the British State. The reason is a lack of a clear, pin-pointed, closely scientific awareness in both countries of the effect this pseudo-intellectual gambolling in the film studio can have upon society.

The American film industry is run as a business, not by preconceived intellectualist notions, not from the clouds, but by practical day to day tests in the realm of reality, at the pay-box. People put down their hard-earned money so that they may see what all normal men and women want to see, a guide to social action, a guide to individual behaviour, a guide to life. They want to be shown how to work, to love, to fight and to live. In the main, they are not interested in the abnormal, the un-natural, the pseudo-intellectual and the anarchist romantic. They have a somewhat different outlook from that which inspires the intelligentsia in the British and Russian film studios. But although the people's instinct is for the good in life, in recent years the cult of evil from Europe has seeped into American films.

The American film, in the main, though not altogether, has reflected the mind of Anglo-Saxon man, the complete man, who realises in practice that life is a balanced combination of positive and negative. It has not weighed down too heavily on the negatives of life in the manner of the pseudo-intellectuals, both British and Russian, for whom "art" in the film must be slow, morbid, murderous, introspective and anti-social, to whom any film with the opposite characteristics of fast tempo, brightness, charitableness, good feeling and sociality is anathema.

It is true that in the vast complexity of the American film industry there occur a great many instances of swift-changing fortunes and rough treatment among those engaged in production, distribution or exhibition. Many get in. Many are elbowed out to the accompaniment of much heart-burning and pain. But looking at

it objectively, one can see that it is this perpetual fluidity and flexibility which has kept the American film industry on its toes. And it is the public that compels Hollywood to remain on its toes. That is the positive aspect as it affects the millions. It is the continual re-ploughing, re-manuring and re-seeding that has kept the American film product bright, crisp, healthy and, in the main, socially constructive. Even though today there is an uneasy equilibrium between the good and the socially evil.

Now let us see what happens in the opposite camp, under conditions of cast-iron protection for the intellectualist film maker in the State controlled film industry of the Soviet Union. Let us take the case of one of the most prominent and world-famous directors in Russia, S. M. Eisenstein, who, after making "Alexander Nevsky" was awarded the Order of Lenin. The fact that he was so honoured is surely a sign that he was held in high esteem by those in authority. A plain Briton or an American would reason that Mr. Eisenstein must have performed some outstanding services to the people of Russia to have earned so high an honour. He must surely have contributed much in labour and achievement for the benefit of the workers and peasants of his country.

What are the facts?

We have it on the authority of the Film Society of London that Eisenstein never made a marketable film for ten years in the interval between his silent "*The General Line*" and his talkie "*Alexander Nevsky*." Ten years in films—such is the speed of technical change—is as a hundred years in any other cultural medium. However, still wearing the mantle of glory for "*The Battleship Potemkin*," made about fifteen years earlier, the privileged Eisenstein finds nothing to disturb his conscience in drawing on the resources of the Workers' and Peasants' State to work on two films, one called "*Bejin Meadows*," both of which were so impossible that they never found their way to public showing. Further, and again we quote from *The Film Society Bulletin*:

He wrote three scripts that never reached the floor and projected eight or more that never reached manuscript. Except for a short experiment, this (*Alexander Nevsky*) is his first sound film.

Thus pampered by the people of Russia, who provided him with food, clothing and shelter and protection for ten years without getting anything in return, and who provided him with the costly means of making two films as a child is provided with toys, films which turned out duds that never saw the light of day, and after wracking his massive brain on script after script that went into the waste-paper basket regularly for ten years, and after visiting the United States to induce Upton Sinclair to sink money into a film photographing the death masks, death dances, the primitive monu-

ments and some of the ancient miseries and cruelties of Mexico in "Thunder Over Mexico," then—at last—a brilliant idea! He will photograph the death, the paraphernalia of death, the destruction and the massacres of Ancient Russia!

Secure from the commercial necessities of testing out every move step by step, Eisenstein, after ten years of negative activity producing barren results, produces "Alexander Nevsky"—negative in content and in its effect upon the Russian people. For it must be remembered that this film appeared not long before the fatal Russo-Nazi pact, which had the effect of placing the onus of fighting the first stages of the war upon the shoulders of others. It should be recalled that Eisenstein, in "Nevsky," does not follow the positive of heartening the Russian people and jittering the enemy. His is the negative method of doing the exact opposite.

He sets off the cruel and lustful enemy of the Russian people, the Teutonic Knights, in the most magnificent and glittering regalia he could find, and jitters his own people by showing how the Teutonic Knights invaded and tortured the Russians in days gone by. But, it will be objected, it happened like that in history. So it did—so what? Because it rained yesterday must it rain today?

The terrible sights we saw on the news reels of the torture camps in Germany were put before us as contemporary evidence of contemporary happenings and as a lesson to the world and a warning. What purpose, cultural or otherwise, does Eisenstein achieve in representing Russian babies being roasted alive by the Teutons in the thirteenth century? Instead of inspiring the Russian people with spirit for the coming ordeal against the Nazis, this film of 1938, soaks the minds of his audience with thoughts of masochism, self-pity, oppression and finally torture by the Teutons. This is exactly the kind of psychological warfare the Nazis employed with which to immobilise their prospective victims. In "Nevsky," the Russians do win at last, but not before the Russian lands are invaded and devastated by the Teutons as those same lands were about to be devastated and laid waste by the Nazis.

Eisenstein has only to repeat the process in his next film and tell us all about what the Nazis did to the Russians, and to keep on repeating the story in every subsequent film, so as to prepare the minds of the Russian people for invasion, torture and oppression, as an automatic, inevitable, historical "cosmic" process to the end of time. We have only to encourage our own intellectuals to bow down and worship, and the bitter reality will follow the filmic representation as surely as night follows day.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE KIND OF THOUGHT PROCESSES that are responsible for the making and the subsequent general worship of "Alexander Nevsky" are clearly closely akin to those of a Shaw or of a Friedrich Engels, when it comes to the core of life. Engels never mentions children in a voluminous work on the family except as objects to be sold, separated from, or quarrelled over by the parents. Similarly Eisenstein, in "Nevsky," never shows us children except as they are being wrested from Russian mothers by the Teutons and flung on to a bonfire.

The Russian people love their children as we do ours, but you would never guess it from any of their fictional films, any more than you would suspect it from British films. British films, as they are being made today, have this at least in common with Russian, French and German (especially German) films, that healthy, happy children living in an agreeable family environment find no place whatever.

The Engels' habit of regarding children and thinking of them only in negative terms finds its expression in films in France, Germany, Russia and Britain differing only in slight degrees. The pursuit of sex receives the greater emphasis. Sex for pleasure. Sex devoid of purpose. Sex with only barren results—no children.

In Russian fictional films, children sometimes appear, but only negatively. We saw what happens to them in "Alexander Nevsky," but in most other films they have a bad time. Even in a good film like "The Road to Life," directed by Nicolai Ekk, which shows children being taken care of under communal auspices, the primal family unit—father, mother, child, is shown in a bad light. The mother of the boy Kolka is killed at the entrance to her home. As a result, the father loses self-control, comes home drunk, and exercises his Sadism on his own son Kolka, who, in consequence, runs off into the streets to join the "wild boys," the orphans of the Civil Wars of 1920 who were roaming the countryside. The father and son become re-united at the end, but the end shows that the best boy of the children's communal centre, Mustapha, is murdered by a criminal, who is never sought out and punished, although in real life

the Russian authorities know well enough what must be done if society is not to fall to pieces. Which is where they differ from the Russian intelligentsia fed on Engels' notions on sex and family.

The Engels' outlook of negativism is, as is to be expected, bound to show up in Germany worst of all. In that country, a year or two before Hitler came to power, a film was made by Fritz Lang called "M". In this, children appear but only for the purpose of being kidnapped and murdered by the Dusseldorf psychopathic homicide, played by Peter Lorre. Fritz Lang has since migrated to Hollywood to carry on the good work he did so effectively for Germany. And there too, not one of Lang's productions show children in a normal, family environment, or in any environment. Children do not exist in Lang's consciousness, not in any positive sense, any more than they exist in the minds of Engels, Eisenstein, Shaw and innumerable others of the same way of thinking.

The film is not only a reflection of the minds of its makers but also a projection of coming events. It helps to spread a certain general social frame of mind, which in turn, determines the action of a given society at a moment of decision. The film is also a highly effective cultural microscope which reveals the hitherto hidden founts of future social action.

But if thought comes before action, as it does, then is it possible to alter the course of a society's future action by altering that action at its source? It is. The widespread mass consumption of film fare means that social action of the future is being prepared in the minds of the people by the kind of message they are taking into their consciousness today. If it is an intellectualised message given to morbid introspection and malevolence, a message unrelated to decent social living, that message in its worst form will produce the worst results, as in Germany. For, it is worth repeating, the film today is the *dominant* form of communication. Books, newspapers, the spoken and the broadcast word are extremely important but they have become subordinate to the film. A little of the cinema goes a long way; further and deeper into the subconscious than printed matter, just as the relatively fewer commercial planes travel faster and further than the older forms of land-bound and sea-borne transport.

Therefore, if we wish to understand a people and its recent history, if we wish to get to grips with a real and friendly understanding with the Soviet Union, for instance, we must try to understand in a spirit of sympathy, the kind of filmic treatment the Russian people have been subjected to since the Revolution. In examining their films we shall also be able to trace how some of their film ideas have impinged upon our own film-makers and affected their outlook. And we shall gain an insight into the reason for the passionate devotion which our own intellectuals have lavished on Russian and other Continental films.

Immediately the revolutionary wars ceased, in 1922, two films with strong intellectualist leanings appeared that hardly made any lasting impression in Russia or abroad, but they are interesting as showing that even as early as 1922 extremely anti-social notions were already coming to the surface. One was "Polikushka" and the other was "The Marriage of the Bear." Why were they allowed? As well ask, why anti-British and anti-social films are allowed in Britain.

"Polikushka" was made under the joint direction of Sanin, a well-known poet, and Moskvin, an actor. It was based on the story by Tolstoy in which a peasant is entrusted with some money, loses it, and commits suicide by hanging.

This film, coming when it did, offers a remarkable insight into the sub-conscious of the Russian intelligentsia of 1922, a land in which, for good or ill, workers and peasants had, with arms in their hands, driven whole armies from their soil, and established a regime which they called a Workers' and Peasants' Government. At the head of this Government was Lenin who had proclaimed that "every cook must learn to rule the State." That is to say it was to be a new kind of Government in which the workers and peasants must learn to legislate and administrate. Everyone must be trained. The art of running the country must never again be allowed to become the sole prerogative of the hand-picked and the elite.

Bearing this social background in mind, what can one say of an intelligentsia that uses the depleted funds of a Peasant State, exhausted with years of war and civil war, to make a film showing a peasant who acquires wealth, loses it, and then hangs himself?

And what are we to say about the makers of "The Marriage of the Bear?" The Russian intelligentsia who were entrusted with the cultural leadership of the unlettered masses as they then were, could find no other source of inspiration than this story by Prosper Merimee, the French "Romantic," of the Count who bites his bride to death on his wedding night! Readers should note particularly this addiction to biting and eating (of the female) which is so much a part of the playful dialogue between Caesar and Cleopatra in Shaw's play. The notion has a way of coming out in different forms by different writers, who, nevertheless, appear to have an almost uncanny affinity with each other.

The first Russian film that undoubtedly made a great stir abroad was "Battleship Potemkin," made by Eisenstein and despite all we have said about Eisenstein and his "Nevsky," "Battleship Potemkin" for its time, but only for its time, registered an immense advance in film technique and content. In those days (1925) everybody was interested in the Russian social experiment and everybody wanted to see what the new Russia could show us in film-craft.

"Battleship Potemkin" had something new to offer, something

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with a purpose expressed with feeling. It were as if the Russian people were saying to the world:

You have called us everything for making a Revolution. Here—just look at this. This is what we had to put up with in Odessa in 1905. This is the kind of thing we made a Revolution to abolish.

But there is another psychological point that most observers and friendly critics seemed to have missed concerning this widely discussed film. A year before "Potemkin" was made, in January 1921, Lenin died.

The stupendous shock and the sense of irreparable loss that the Russian people suffered as a result, can hardly be realised. The population of Russia was preponderantly peasant and culturally child-like. For centuries they had been ruled by a tyrannous Tsardom, but so real was the child to father relationship in their minds, that the Tsar was always spoken of as "Batushka," Little Father.

To the peasants, Lenin was as different from the Tsar as light is from darkness. He was a new type of ruler, one who was concerned in giving the poor a new way of life. This little man who sat in the citadel of the mighty, in the age-old Kremlin, was for the first time in history, not only in word but in very truth, the Little Father to the millions. He wore no airs and graces. He was just "one of us."

When Lenin died, it was as if a calamity of the first magnitude had occurred in the life of the people. They felt desolate, inconsolable, deserted, as if the very light of the sun had been extinguished. "Battleship Potemkin" reflects this mood more closely and vividly than any other Russian picture since. As if long years of war, civil wars and destruction were not enough, there comes the death of Lenin. This is the last straw. The cup of bitterness was now brim full, pressed down and running over. Every-thing that was in the Russian social consciousness at this moment, comes through white hot in "Potemkin," but what is most note-worth in this film of the 1905 Revolution, is the emphasis placed on the death of Matushenko, the leader of the revolt on the Battleship. His body is reverently transported of the revolts on the Battleship at Odessa and is laid in state under a flapping tent to the quay-side at Odessa file past in deepest mourning. Although this episode occurred historically, it is significant that such depth of emphasis should have been laid upon it in the film. Matushenko was the most valued of the sailors—He was the leader.

If the emphasis in "Potemkin" upon the death of Matushenko were only an isolated instance of the best leader dying in Russian film output, it would be difficult to identify it with the death of Lenin in the social sub-conscious. but the fact is indisputable that from 1925 onwards, innumerable films have shown that the best leaders, the best Communists, the most treasured members of the community, die and are bitterly mourned.

Now one could sympathise with the Matushenko incident in "Potemkin." One could forgive the showing of a similar incident in one or two subsequent films, but this persistent suggestion pumped into the minds of the Russian people, of the best leader of the community always dying in film after film for twenty years, is a form of social masochism which only a strong pre-revolutionary literary tradition, as in Russia, could have perpetuated.

We see this literary tradition in evidence in "Mother," made by Pudovkin in 1926, from the story by Maxim Gorky. The bricks of a literary work are little forms and symbols, letters constructed into words and words placed in sequence to make sense. A book, in a sense, is a negative, which when read becomes a positive—a picture of the world as the writer intended it. But the film is itself a positive—a picture, a living picture of the world. Therefore, it should, *it must*, carry *positive* notions to the world. What happens at the end in Pudovkin's "Mother"?

The mother is carrying the red flag among a crowd of people in an anti-Tsarist procession in 1905. The mother who is to all men and in all ages, *the positive*, who has always been reverenced as the Madonna, the one who gives forth life, and is good and sweet and kind, in this film, is trampled upon by the hoofs of the Cossacks and she expires. The good dies, *but the symbol lives*. For as she expires, the flag she carries miraculously fades out and then miraculously fades in again, fluttering on the tower of the Kremlin, twelve years later. This may seem alright *described in words*, but, seen objectively as a living proposition the thing doesn't make sense, not if you are in earnest about propagating the good life among the people. The flag of a nation should, of course, be respected, but it should be associated as a positive symbol with a positive—life, not death.

Pudovkin followed this film with "The End of St. Petersburg," telling the story of the beginning of Leningrad through the adventures of a peasant. The picture, though advanced for its time, has a number of derogatory features including underground conspiracy. It ends on the balcony of the Winter Palace, just captured. It is early morning and all is peaceful. The central character, the peasant, lies wounded, alone, tortured with suffering from a bullet wound. Emphasis upon wounds, suffering and above all, *aloneness*.

There is underground plotting in another contemporary silent film "Two Days," directed by Stabavoi. There is very little to commend this film about the civil wars in the way of technique or social example, as a short description will show. A janitor, who is the spit and image of the hotel porter, played so self-pityingly by Emil Jannings in the Weimar film "The Last Laugh," is in sole charge of an aristocratic mansion fled by a wealthy White family. This janitor is a staunch family retainer and is quite naturally a sup-

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porter of the Whites. His son, quite as naturally, is a supporter of the Reds, but as he is also *the best leader of the Reds*, you know from the start what will happen to him before the picture ends, notwithstanding the fact that the picture is sponsored and financed by the Red Government.

A Red cavalry troop led by this janitor's son take possession of the mansion and make themselves at home, to the father's intense disgust. However, the news comes that the White army is returning in strength and the Red cavalry hurriedly take their departure, but it is decided that the janitor's son should remain behind in the village, incognito, to carry on espionage. When the White army duly return, this best leader of the Reds is double-crossed and betrayed by a twelve-year-old son of the wealthy family, who had hidden in the mansion during the Red occupation and had been fed and protected by the janitor.

The Whites lose no time, take the young Red leader to a tree in the grounds and hang him. The janitor father, overwhelmed with grief, weeps below the hanging feet of his son. Retribution for this inhuman betrayal and base ingratitude does not come by a social act of justice with the return of the Reds, but by an act of personal vengeance, arbitrary, anarchic and individualist, committed by the bereaved father. In the dead of night, as in dream consciousness, the janitor creeps round the mansion with a candle, sets fire to the building, and the Whites entrapped are thus destroyed. A simple question arises here. Would any army in war time (or in peace time for that matter) go to sleep in a mansion without placing sentries all round the place?

This film, whether its makers knew it or not, was an advocacy of individualist, anarchic, anti-social behaviour, expressing childish, dream-conscious, masochistic impulses. There are also examples of traitorous, almost unbelievable conduct, particularly by the twelve-year-old rich son, a disgusting little wretch who betrays the son of his benefactor. Thus we have betrayal, conspiracy, again betrayal and further conspiracy sandwiched in alternating layers. No wonder the film cut no ice, not even among the intellectuals abroad, and that's saying something.

Soon after there came "Storm Over Asia," directed by Pudovkin. Like "The End of St. Petersburg," it had certain elements of a progressive character, but like all Pudovkin's films it had many characteristics that were introspective and anti-social, mockery of religion being one of them. The sub-conscious memory trace of Lenin's death is evident in the scene in which *the best leader of the partisan fighters* is slowly carried, wounded, into camp on a stretcher. His last words as he dies are: "Keep in touch with the Red Army."

Then we had "The General Line," directed by S. M. Eisenstein. The portrayal of conspiracy and the most precious member of the community always dying, had by now, 1928, become a fixed habit

travels to the distant North *alone* and unaccompanied, at the village of a small Mongal tribe who live by sheep rearing. The head of the village Soviet or Council, the chairman, is a great hulk of a fellow, lazy and slow-witted, who spends most of his time snoring, when he should be looking after the interests of the villagers. Under these conditions, the big local kulak, a cunning old fox, acquires all the best for himself in the village, and even press-gangs other people's children away from school to look after his sheep. Thus we see our intellectualised Soviet film-makers faithfully true to their type the world over. When in Russia, the common people were looking for a lead to learn how to run their communal affairs, trust the intellectuals to show them how *not* to conduct a village community!

Alone, with no assistance from the central authorities, the young teacher organises the new school. Soon the position resolves itself as a *personal* struggle between herself and the kulak as to who shall have control of the children. It is not a public concern at all. When she loses the first round and the children are pressed to mind the sheep, she submissively partakes of humble pie and goes out to teach the children in the open, out on the snowy wastes where they are minding the sheep. She does this instead of making a fight for the school, which she could easily have done with the help of the villagers and the moral sanction of the State power in the background. She preferred a Russo-Nazi pact with the aggressor!

Later she is obliged to visit a place far away in the wilderness, where there is not a landmark in sight on the way. And of all people in the world, whom do you think she takes to drive her there in a sledge—*alone*? Why, the very foxy kulak who is her most bitter and embittered opponent! The naïvete of entrusting herself alone in the wilderness with this hardbitten enemy is almost unbelievable. Yet there it is. The veriest child of five who still has his defence instincts unimpaired, uninfluenced by intellectualist crack-pot thinking would have clearly avoided such a situation. Not so the makers of this film.

When these two, the teacher and the kulak, come into about the middle of the wastes, the kulak cunningly advises his passenger to step out of his sledge so that she may stamp her feet for warmth, and while her back is slightly turned, he dashes into the sledge and makes off, leaving her *alone*, with snow all round as far as the eye can reach and not a living thing in sight. There follows the usual exercise to be found regularly in films of this type: the self-pity, the sense of loneliness, the staggering and rising and falling and staggering *ad infinitum*. She is nearly frozen to death but a search-party finds her and nurses her back to strength. Unlike the best Communist heroes in other films, for once, she does not die, but she goes through it very badly just the same, and it is touch and go whether she will live.

The telegraph taps an S.O.S. out at full speed and a plane arrives from Moscow to take her to hospital. And here we come again to that central chronic defect which recurs as regularly as clockwork in Soviet film production, with sickening repetition. The foxy kulak is never sought after, or heard of again or mentioned. Again the murderer has got away with it, giving encouragement, intentional or unintentional, for other potential evil-doers to go forth and repeat the performance, and offering depression and despondency among the good people in the audience in whose minds no social balance for social preservation is effected.

The year 1933 was, of course, the year of the Nazi succession in Germany. The effect upon the intellectualist film-makers in the Soviet Union was a further collapse into negativism and defeatism. It was not their fault that Russia eventually won against the Nazis, after the bloodiest sacrifices of any nation in history, any more than it was the fault of our own film-makers that we eventually won.

Pudovkin gave the movement towards the intensification of negativism the sanction of his prestige when a year or two earlier he made the very significantly titled film, "The Deserter." About the same time Dovshenko, of "Earth" fame, produced the talkie "Ivan." This stress in the titles upon *individuals* is another aspect of that negative trend towards aloneness and away from the positive—collectiveness, co-operation, the team spirit.

Kuleshov made the talkie "The Great Consoler," based on O'Henry's story "Jimmy Valentine." The film is an extraordinary exercise in introspection, and like "The Deserter" and "Alone," it tells of one who vacillates between his social duty and an immediate advantage. This happens in an American prison where the prisoner in question is corruptly offered an easy job if he will look aside when mal-practices occur. The prisoner is shown as accepting the immediate advantage.

As is usual, and as is to be expected when the litterateur makes a film (he should stick to his last), the brutalities, the evil side of prison life, the negatives are shown in action, but the positive remedy is offered to the audience not in action but in words. Says the central character:

Oh, with what bitterness will I describe this awful prison to the world as soon as I get the chance.

That's what he'll do about it—describe it! Whether any remediable action will follow the description is not even hinted at in the film.

Nicolai Ekk, who made "The Road to Life," directed "The Nightingale." In this picture he used colour film, the medium of the future, but the story did not point to the positive and the good future as it ought to be, but to the negative and drab past as it actually used to be, to the pre-Revolutionary state of the Russian

women. And speaking of Ekk, it is worth recalling that his "The Road to Life," which had many good ideas on child psychology and training to offer, showed a similar tendency to place too heavy stress on the drab and the negative, the harrowing episode of the mother (of Kolka) suffering a long drawn-out death. This death of the mother is a close pathological link with the death of the mother in Pudovkin's "Mother." It is also related to the same sub-conscious urge to display Russian children as being thrown on to a bonfire in "Alexander Nevsky," and to Engels' inability to think of children in any positive sense in "The Origin of the Family."

The end of "The Road to Life" is highly significant too. As will be remembered, Mustapha, the central character, a leader of a gang of stray, wandering children, victims of the civil wars, is taken after capture with his gang to a distant place where the children are taught to run their own commune. Mustapha, in the course of time, becomes the best and most responsible leader of this commune. The boys have been building a railway track from their place of work to the main line, but to disrupt the work, an old-time criminal starts a drinking saloon and cabaret nearby to which some of the boys fall victim. By a ruse, in which a lot of secretive whispering goes on, Mustapha and some of the best of the boys help to smash up the saloon and arrest most of the organisers, but the chief criminal manages to escape.

There is to be a ceremonial opening of their new railway line, and a beflagged train will start from the railway station to the commune. The night before, *in the dead of night and alone* (note, particularly, the darkness and aloneness, as in so many Soviet films, especially in "Earth") Mustapha makes his way on a hand-propelled truck along the line to where the ceremonial journey will start from in the morning.

With joy in his heart (like that of the young Red leader in his lone street dance in "Earth") Mustapha sings a Tartar song with the rhythmic forward and backward movement of the propulsion of the truck. Suddenly the truck overturns and Mustapha shoots up into the air and lands some distance away from the line. The criminal, who had been chased out of the saloon the night before, had loosened a rail, and now he stands facing Mustapha with dagger in hand, intent upon vengeance. A terrible fight ensues. We hear it with trepidation as the fight goes on in the early morning darkness, and we hear the heartrending, half-cry, half-sob of Mustapha as the knife pierces his heart. Then stillness. The gradual dim light of dawn and the croaking of a frog. Mustapha lies dead.

In all earnestness and in all friendliness, let us put a few common-sense questions. When the criminal escapes from the saloon in this picture, why does everybody seem content to leave it at that, as they do in all the other Soviet films we have mentioned? Is this of no concern to the public, and are there no Police or other

State bodies for the maintenance of public safety in Russia? If there are, and the criminal's record must have been known to all, why were not the Police informed? And why, with this dangerous criminal loose about the countryside is Mustapha permitted to travel for miles through the dark night and alone? Why couldn't somebody go with him? Why is the whole thing made out to be a *personal* quarrel (again as in "Alone") between Mustapha and the criminal and not a *social* problem to be faced up to and solved between society and the criminal? Why, as in the other Soviet films, does this end and there is nothing to indicate that the criminal will be hunted out and brought to justice? Why must the criminal *always* get away with it? What is the corollary you are placing in the minds of the Russian people when they see that evil men prosper? That the good men, the best leaders, the most precious members of the community, must *always* get it in the neck?

The year 1934 saw a further slump into negativism and intellectualism with the appearance of "Chapaiev," directed by the Vasiliev brothers. "Chapaiev" has been very widely eirenlated in the Soviet Union which, one can only say, is a very great pity as we shall see in a moment. Chapaiev is an unlettered peasant at the beginning of the Revolution, rather self-centred, a braggart and quite a bit of an anarchist into the bargain, always wanting his own way. During the civil wars he becomes the leader of a roving band. Because of certain guerrilla successes he has achieved against the White armies, he thinks himself no end of a fine fellow and compares himself with Napoleon and Alexander the Great. It is only after a good length of the film is through, and only after considerable pressure put upon him by the military delegate from the regular Red Army H.Q. that the boaster is induced to see the error of his ways, and he agrees at last to co-ordinate his band's activities with the needs of the Red Army as a whole instead of running the civil war as if it were a private quarrel of his own with the Whites. Chapaiev remains the leader of his own men who are now integrated into the Red Army command.

Then comes a sequence which ends the film upon the most devastatingly depressing and psychologically immature note that has ever been sounded in any film anywhere. What a depressing thing this was to show the Russian people before the invasion of Russia by the Nazis can only be imagined.

The village is asleep, but the Red sentinels who have been posted all around are shown to Russian cinema audiences in their millions as oblivious of the most elementary rule of warfare, by dropping off to sleep at their posts. You watch with your heart in your mouth, as the White enemy slowly and gradually creep towards the Red trenches and with a final swoop, overcome and kill the Red sentries. The rest of the garrison are caught in their underclothes, there is a dashing about, chaos, confusion and panic. Many are killed, but

Chapaiev has the most miraculous escapes amidst burning cottages. With his back to the wall, he retreats from cottage to cottage, firing a machine-gun at the enemy all the time. He dashes up the first floor of one house which is burning fiercely, sets up his machine-gun again and continues firing. Eventually all are scattered and Chapaiev dashes into a river, is shot at, and is drowned. Fade—The End.

Well, that's "Chapaiev." Could Dr. Goebbels have done any better? When the Russian people should have been primed and steeled for the coming ordeal, the Russian intellectuals show them how *not* to run a war, how a leader has so little influence over his men that they forget the first duty of war and get themselves caught and slaughtered, asleep at their posts, and that last, but not least, it is *our* side, *our* best leaders, *our* best men who are finally destroyed. The message of "Chapaiev" is the same, monotonously repeated in almost every Russian film, whether it deals with war or peace. It is the same in "Two Days," in "Earth," in "Professor Mamlock," or in "Alexander Nevsky." In the latter there is a concession. The Russians do win at the very last. The slaughter and the torture by the Teutons is given in maximum, *in action*; the victory is given at the end *in minimum* and then in *speech*, by the Prince himself.

When the Nazis had completed their conquest of Poland they made a film called "The Baptism of Fire." With this film they showed the wavering neutrals at their Embassies exactly what they did to Poland. The implied message behind that film was quite direct and clear. "See what terrible fighters and killers we are. So, if you want to keep a whole skin, keep your nose out of it, or better still, do business with us, or come and help us—or else." That Goebbels' message is exactly what the Russian intellectuals were dinging into the hearts and brains of the Russian people year in and year out ever since the Revolution. See what the Teutons did to you. See what the White armies did to you, see what the capitalists and Tsarists did to you, see what the Germans did to you and what the Nazis did to you, but never mind in the least bit about what you did to them, *except in speech*, like Nevsky's oratory, and Professor Mamlock's fist-shaking auto-obituary on the balcony.

The Russo-Nazi pact that set the match to the war had nothing to do with that mental treatment of nearly twenty years' standing, say the apologists. What, nothing at all?

In the Russian film output we get a slightly varying slant in the de Sade outlook, linked to dream consciousness of aloneness, darkness, disaster, defeat and death, that the bad men prosper and the good men fail. Dream conscious identification takes another form in the film "The New Gulliver," directed by Ptushko. The story is of a young Russian boy who *drops off to sleep* after reading *Gulliver's Travels*, and sees himself in the dream as Gulliver.

He finds himself in the land of little people, played by puppets who run their State according to the favourite caricature conceptions of the Left wing as to what a Capitalist society looks like. Naturally, the introspective dream-consciousness presented in this living form dangerously distorts the true situation outside Russia. Ptushko places the workers in his dream State below ground, as miners who conspire in secrecy to overthrow the regime. And of course, the workers are unable to do this job without the active assistance of the giant boy dreamer.

Thus are Russian suspicions against the outside capitalist world perpetually fed, even though Anglo-American aid to Russia, which was real and tangible, should have done something to dispel them. A sub-conscious dream is far more likely to promote suspicion than understanding, if the dream is more attractively presented in the cinema, than in the reality say of American canned food or lorries, and British army boots, medical supplies and planes.

"We From Kronstadt," directed by Dzigan in 1936, likewise displays a good number of dream-conscious unrealities, such as the woman heroine passing unseathed through lines of fire. There are also derogatory scenes of men importuning a woman. True to the Soviet film tradition of losing their best men, the best sailors in the Red fleet are captured by the White army and are executed by a particular involved method, which could only occur for representation in film to minds soaked in Dostoievsky and the associated de Sade cults. The sailors have their hands bound behind them. Huge stones are hung on their chests. Then they are thrown into the foaming sea below the cliff, one by one. All drown except one, who, with a knife concealed upon his person, manages to cut his own bonds while swimming in the sea and swims back to the shore. This sailor, instead of dashing off to his garrison with vital information, takes his leisurely time to bring the body of the Red captain from the sea, builds an elaborate cairn of stones above the body, places a sailor's cap at the head of it, contemplates the effect—and departs. Yes, but what about the living who are waiting for vital news? They can wait. The slow building up of the cairn is more important. Death before life—in that order. Notice, too, that it is what *they*, the enemy, do to *us* which is given the greater emphasis, as in all these Russian intellectualist State-protected films. What *we* did to *them* is of so much less importance.

Then there is "The Last Night," directed by Reisman and also made in 1936. This dealt with the Revolutionary period in 1917 as it affected the family of a factory owner and that of a worker. From what we know of the Weimar German films like "The Last Laugh," with Jannings, and the American Jannings film "The Last Command," we realise what to expect from "The Last Night." The contemplation of abstract time and blurred distance is one of the most unmistakable symptoms of dream-conscious processes, and

especially is this so when the title points to "The End of . . .," "The Last . . ." or "Alone . . ." These characteristics, "last" or "lost" or "aloneness" or "darkness," time and distant horizons are all related to the earliest primitive thought processes, consistent with that long pre-historic age when man felt far more alone than he is today, when the emphasis *had to be* on self for the sake of sheer self-preservation against a world teeming with enemies. Those days are nearly two million years gone, but our European intellectuals of all nations still remember them and perpetuate them in European and sometimes in British films.

One very important Soviet film, which was made in 1937, was "Lenin in October." It is certain that, had Lenin lived, he would have firmly rejected the way this film was made, for not only does it show the workers at the Putilov works in 1917 behaving like incompetents who chase away armed counter-revolutionaries whom they could easily have disarmed and arrested, but it also places Lenin in the position of a man who did a job of work, not as a leader, but as a deity. Lenin always regarded himself as one modest, integral unit in a vast social organism and not as someone to be placed on a pedestal.

In this connection there is an incident which again illustrates the chronic habit of the Russian intellectuals of showing how *not* to behave in a grave emergency. The preparations for the rising in 1917 are ready, but in the interests of safety the Revolutionary Committee decide that Lenin must go into hiding. A trusted worker is given the task of looking after him, and this worker takes Lenin to his own home, where he introduces him to his wife as just another worker. After a little chat it is time to go to bed, but Lenin, incognito, despite being pressed, will not have the bed, but insists on being put up on the floor, content with a coverlet and pillow. As Lenin lies down to rest, the husband and wife are still up, the light in the room dims. The woman looks at the reclining figure on the floor and slowly turns to her husband, her face suffused with awe, and with a breathless whisper asks: "Is it he?" And the husband, though, he has been sworn to secrecy says: "Yes, it is he." Then they both turn their gaze slowly and with reverence, and with a beatific expression continue sitting, as if they were looking at the Holy Ghost.

What does it matter if Lenin's life is placed in jeopardy by the husband's indiscretion, it's a wow of a scene!

There have been many Soviet films of the clearly objective type such as "Turk-Sib" and "Men of the Woods," which were of exceeding great interest, and were for the most part free from the dream-conscious outlook, but there have been a preponderating number of the over-intellectualised films about the building up of heavy industry, like Dziga-Vertov's "abstract" film with the appropriate "abstract" title "Enthusiasm," a film more like sound and

fury than picture, but the chief mainstay of Soviet pictures has been the presentation of revolts and revolutions of the past, both Russian and foreign.

In view of this extraordinary Russian intellectual pre-occupation with European revolutions that turned out abortive and were suppressed, it is both strange (though not inexplicable) and disturbing to our friendly relationships, that in all their film output for twenty years, there is never a mention of the overwhelming importance to mankind of the *successful* revolutions made by the English speaking peoples. For instance, the Cromwellian Revolution that abolished the Divine Right of Kings and cleared the path towards industrialisation, and which led in turn to the Pilgrim Fathers leaving this country to implant the seeds of the American Revolution with its *positive* message of Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.

The revolutions of the Russian intellectual film makers are almost exclusively concerned with those of the barricade, the conspiratorial cellar and the flaming sword.

We look in vain for a film of the English revolution of the introduction of the steam engine, for Faraday's revolution of electricity, for Graham Bell's revolution of the telephone, for Marconi's revolution of wireless telegraphy, for Edison's revolution of the moving picture and the gramophone record, the Wright brothers' revolution of flying and Baird's revolution of television. Never a mention of Lord Lister's contribution to antiseptic surgery, and Simpson's use of chloroform in anaesthesia, and never a whisper of the contribution to the world of the work of Darwin, which opened up fields of investigation in a thousand different directions.

Why are these revolutions left out and "forgotten"? For the same reason that Shaw "forgets" an important childbirth in his story of "Caesar and Cleopatra." Because the negatives of life dominate and control all these people's consciousness. Because in "forgetting" births and joy and increase and happiness, they "remember" deaths and misery and destruction and mourning. Recall the addiction to "loneliness," which is the opposite and negative of get-togetherness. Recall their love for the darkness of night rather than the brightness of day. Recall also that it is always *our* side which is made to suffer while the enemy get away with it, and indeed are sometimes commiserated with.

Remember that the English revolutions we have mentioned were successful revolutions, beneficent and positive, while the revolutions these intellectualist film makers are fond of presenting are abortive, destructive, ephemeral and negative, and all display the dream characteristics of self-pity, introspection and anarchy, the blind senseless anarchy which is some people's idea of "cosmism." And why do these our intellectuals, both Russian and British, rigidly persist in that way of life and presentation?

Because these people are incurably addicted to a particular, automatic, fixed and rigid system of sense patterns by which they work. These sense patterns demand of them, their owners, that when they write a play or a novel or make a film in Britain or in Russia, or anywhere in Europe, they seek by every means in their power to establish:

The supremacy of the symbol over the reality.

The supremacy of the idea imagined over the thing observed.

The supremacy of sensation enjoyed, irrespective and without regard to social consequences.

The supremacy of the abnormal over the normal.

The supremacy of evil over good, the sacrilegious over the religious.

The supremacy of the individual over the social.

The supremacy of darkness over daylight.

The supremacy of the infinite over the limited and normal.
(See, in particular, Shaw's "cosmism" and Powell-Pressburger's "A Matter of Life and Death.")

The supremacy of the cataclysmic over the moderate and normal.

The supremacy of the sub-conscious over the conscious.

The supremacy of the primitive over the civilised.

The supremacy of the destructive over the constructive.

The supremacy of the unhealthy over the healthy.

The supremacy of the ugly and decrepit over the beautiful and sound.

The supremacy of the negative over the positive.

That is the list in the simplest and barest statement of the sub-conscious dream manifestations that make up the bricks of all the films of the European school to which our film critics and film makers have offered obeisance for years. The reader may check and compare the actual films we have described with the above list of characteristic, automatic sense patterns to which the intellectuals, both here and abroad, have tried to induce the rest of mankind to follow.

CHAPTER TWENTY.

BY REASON OF OUR CLOSENESS to the Continent, and the protection offered by the Quota Act, those Sadistic characteristics we have described are at the moment dominant in British films. This dominance can only be short-lived and transient, because negativism and destruction is just negativism and destruction, and has no power to reproduce itself. This cult must, therefore, come to an end.

That does not mean it will come to an end by itself. It must be put an end to by conscious human beings who know what they are doing and why. There is greater hope that this country will lead towards a change to the positive and eventually to a leading position in world film product, because this was the one country that stood its ground *consciously* against that other negative and destructive influence in the world of reality, the Nazi regime. This is the country that showed the example which other countries later followed. The example of good film making must, therefore, come from Britain. America has been in the lead so far, but that lead has only been partially conscious and deliberate, and partially due to historical and cultural forces of which the American film makers themselves are not wholly aware. Being unaware of those forces, and doing quite well, they have shown a somewhat disturbing tendency to drift.

Britain, with all her shortcomings, with all the handicaps of Quota and nearness to the Continent, can still take the lead qualitatively by making a conscious effort to arrest the tendency to drift, by turning film making from an unconscious to a conscious process. And the first step is to learn and study the difference between the negatives and positives in human cultural presentation. Once this is solved, the other attendant problems of theme, presentation, technique, background, decor and the creation of stars will fall into place.

The negatives and positives in human culture follow the pattern of human society itself. The positive, the creative, the beneficent instincts of man are those which have enabled him to inherit the world as he knows it today. A long-linked never-ending chain of

separate endeavours lies behind the facile turning of an electric switch, or the streaking path of a fast plane across the sky. Innumerable men in their creative zeal have sacrificed themselves to endow the world with comfort, safety and survival. Numberless men have died in the age-old struggle to implant more social and more beneficent impulses into the souls of men.

This, in the widest and most general sense, is the history of mankind upon the earth. But every positive virtue that man possesses has also its negative aspect. In evolution there is no such thing as a perfectly clear and straight line ahead. Neither is there such a thing as an ultimate and final goal for mankind which, when reached, will entitle us all to sit down and vegetate. Each generation does its own work for social survival, and aims at leaving things for the next generation in a little better state than before. In achieving these tasks men have faced hunger, danger, strife, enemies, natural catastrophe, disease and death.

The link between man and man in this eternal struggle is mutual care made possible by the evolutionary development of the social instincts. These instincts having been but recently implanted, are sometimes apt to fall into disuse and atrophy in some, but only some men, as happened in the case of the Germans. Christ taught "Love one another," and in all the struggles of history, in all the manifold religious and ideological forms these struggles assumed, it remains true that the good men, the social group capable of exercising the social instincts to the highest degree, the group that could "love one another" would prevail over the advocates of hate and disruption and evil, in the end.

Evil, however, is not an abstraction; it is not without embodiment and real, natural roots. It is the reverse side of good. All of us are under the constant necessity of choosing consciously by habit, training and example, the right thing and rejecting the wrong. In an expanding, progressive society, that is the general pattern of behaviour. On the other hand, a society on the downward curve shows signs of slackening in its ideals and in its social impulses. Little by little, the principles by which that society has risen and prospered become whittled down, until those principles are honoured more in the breach than in the observance.

The break comes first among the leaders, the thinkers, the teachers, the preachers, the writers, the painters and, finally, the film makers. Instead of offering a creative leadership as before, they insensibly veer round until instead of encouraging love, which is a social cohesive, they begin to set out before us the blue-prints for hate, dissolution and destruction. The mass of the people change apparently insensibly too, with the change in the quality of leadership, until what we understand as culture has changed to its opposite and has become subversive, decayed and utterly reprehensible. It has happened thus many and many a time in history, and the

"wrath of God" has intervened to cleanse the putrid tangle.

We must, therefore, carefully differentiate the true progressive leadership from subsersive and destructive leadership. This may not be easy. For one man may have first the positive and then the negative impulse dominant in him. Because we enjoyed and appreciated the social message of "Mr. Deeds Goes To Town," we may tend to condone the film "Arsenic and Old Lace" by the sheer conditioned reflex of applauding anything and everything that Frank Capra directs. We may ourselves have passed through the same ascent and descent of social feeling without being fully aware that the one film was creative, progressive and beneficent and the other quite destructive, regressive and malevolent in its social effects.

Hitherto, the universal habit has been to apply the word "culture" to both the destructive and constructive phases of cultural leadership without the slightest discrimination. When, as during the inter-war years, culture had changed from its true purpose of elevating mankind and was employed to denigrate mankind instead, "culture" was still used to designate both its progressive, beneficent aspect and its opposite.

The vast body of anti-social, egotistical, paradoxical writers, dramatists, pseudo-scientists and film makers, who by their work deny that man is good, and affirm that evil is supreme and that only evil men prosper, have often been given the general description of Romantics. The name assumes, more or less, that they deny the existence of the real, the objective world, that they live in a world of their own imagined making. A *roman* is, strictly speaking, a story, narrated by an individual writer or speaker. The story may be morally good or morally bad, according to the outlook or inlook of the narrator.

Such stories have, in the main stream of Greek-Roman-Christian culture, come to us in early times through the *Romance* languages, that is, those languages derived from the old Roman tongue—Latin. Many of those stories in the *Romance* tongues, Italian, French and Spanish, were later rendered into other than *Romance* languages, but the word "*Romance*" has survived as meaning a story having the same qualities as the earliest of the *Romance* narratives, qualities of idealisation and leisurely cultivation: ideal lands where beauty of background and beauty of character were the vehicles of chivalrous action. These stories came to us in England through our Norman-French and Italian connections. These were the true Romances in which the original term is correctly applied.

But in relatively modern times, from about the middle of the eighteenth century, the term tended to be linked to quite another upgrowth. This was a literary movement so wide that only the barest summary is possible in this book. It was a swing of the pendulum in the opposite direction, and the word "*Romance*" changed from its original meaning and intention of uniting people

in elevated, chivalrous behaviour, to another meaning the effect of which was to lower men into purely selfish, sensuous creatures, living ego-centric lives and encouraging egotistical pleasures of the imagination.

'Instead of cultivating chivalry, gentleness, fellow feeling and good neighbourliness, these decayed Romances encouraged pagan mysticisms of various kinds, they retired for backgrounds to grottos, caves, wild forests or fantastic gardens. Their houses were cob-webbed and dim, full of Eastern curios and barbaric ornament. The poems, dramas and later the novels of this perverse cult all acquired the same sort of background and character but, of course, with every diversification and extension that the human mind could conceive in unrestrained, unlimited, ungodly and anti-social egotistical licence.

The classic writers, of whom Shakespeare is the best known, limited their work to the desirable and mainly healthy in the picturing of life. Their villains are villains and, like villains, they leave the stage "so manacled and so disgraced" that no one is tempted to emulate their example. A character like Shakespeare's Cardinal Wolsey throws a shaft of light on human moral understanding when in his deep-felt remorse he calls out:

O, Cromwell, I charge thee, cast away ambition.

Had I but served my God as I have served my king,

He would not, in mine age, have left me naked to mine enemies.

But the so-called Romantics, who have turned to despising the moral understanding, reject the real world—the world of human community and sociality, and embrace only the unreal world—the world they create from the material of their own sub-conscious, which is bound by no known laws except the law of irresponsibility in dreams. They worship what they call "art," and at the same time cast off the "mores," the morals and the civilised manners of the real, objective world. They become a law unto themselves. For love they substitute hate. For reverence, they substitute desecration. For pleasure in normal, natural surroundings and normal, natural relationships, they substitute pleasure in cruelty and unnatural perversions of the basic instincts. Instead of loving life and light, they embrace the cult of death and darkness. For the limitations of the real world, they seize the unlimited infinite of the dream-conscious imagination, with all its distinctive, negative characteristics noted in our previous chapter. Their symbolisms embody the insular, the lonely, the dark, the anti-social, the decayed; lonely inns in inaccessible places and distant islands in uncharted waters; storms and cataclysms and dreadful disasters.

Now, although throughout this book we have spoken of the American film as a healthy influence, it must be stated here and now that the American film has not shown itself immune from the tendency to decay which is discernible in other forms of cultural presentation. Everything—oratory, poetry, painting, literature, the

drama, and now the film—starts as an intelligible, straightforward message with a good intent, rises to a peak, and then declines and falls to introspection, negativism and destruction.

There is an old saying that Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do. It is, therefore, not surprising that idleness made possible by an immense superfluity of wealth creates the mental conditions for encouraging negative, destructive and idle ideas. In German, the word *edelmann* means nobleman, and the similarity of "edel" and "idle" indicate a common root connotation. This is not an argument against the possession of wealth, well-being and security, but against that superfluity of wealth owned by a few which absolves the owners from all social obligations and common duties. A state of mind which is conditioned by the spectacle of wealth pouring in and accumulating, from Heaven knows where and without apparent great effort, is bound, in many cases, to engender the parallel thought or sense impressions that it is quite all right to indulge one's mind in anti-human practices. Things become more important than men. Happiness is sought not in making others happy, but in seeing others unhappy in every shade of degree from humiliation to torture. That explains why, to this day, there are a few super-wealthy people among us to whom suffering and torment among millions of human beings evokes not the slightest ripple of sympathy or pity. On the contrary, they like it.

But this obliviousness, this atrophy of the social instincts, can now no longer be confined to a handful of wealthy people at the top. It can be spread among the people actively. It can be cultivated by the cultivators, the torch-bearers of so-called culture, as we have already shown. The message of the Marquis de Sade could only impinge upon a relatively few in his own day, before the mass of the people could read or write. With universal education, all people are enabled to absorb the de Sade message more readily. In the age of film and television, the danger is even more widespread and terrifying. Just how terrifying may be gauged by the record of the Nazi regime, and by the nature of the cultural food fed to the German people during the preceding Weimar regime.

In the realm of literature, in the 1890's, barely twenty years after the introduction of universal compulsory education in this country, there set in a period of most dreadful decadence after the appearance of Swinburne, Wilde, Beardsley and others. One of the most terrible and decayed of all the stories, or "Romances," that circulated at that time was Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. We shall have something to say about the background and origin of this story and of the M.G.M. film based upon it, but here it might be pointed out that Mr. Bernard Shaw was a young man in his prime in those days, one of the many writers plying his pen and absorbing—and being absorbed—by the literary atmosphere then so fashionable. It is, therefore, hardly an accident that the dominant note of negativ-

ism and anti-sociality sounds so loudly in all Mr. Shaw's plays and in such of his novels as *The Unsocial Socialist*, so aptly titled.

The reader may ask: how was it possible for a progressive Christian country like England, flourishing and expanding under the beneficent rule of a Christian Queen, how was it possible for this country to have bred that nest of putrescence and corruption of which the Wilde school of literature was only one of the expressions? One may as well ask how a good Christian like Mr. Rank could find himself spending his money, or the money under his control, to propagate the views and sentiments of anti-Christian Mr. Shaw. One may as well ask why the firm of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, for many years miles away and ahead of every other film producing company in America, should turn to translating "The Picture of Dorian Gray" into film.

All we can do is to state the facts, show what has happened, point out the tendencies and where they will lead if left unchecked. After that it is your job and mine to help to stop those tendencies and direct them into beneficent and away from malevolent channels.

To explain is not to condone. Evil in any form and wherever it appears can be explained, but it cannot be explained away or excused. It can be explained as a gradually developing cancerous blind spot growth over the judgment standards of the Hays organisation in America. It can be explained as a phenomenon very much like the passing of the scripts and the financing of "49th Parallel" and "The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp" by our own authorities at a time when we were battling for our lives. The social and moral code which gave the Hays office its reason for existence has served its purpose well in the past. But what has happened with Hays has happened times without number, throughout the thousands of years of man's social history. Always a gradual, an almost imperceptible soft-footed creeping in of anti-social practice or precept to gradually undermine the existing social and moral structure. The process is so gradual and cumulative, bit by bit, that when it reaches its ultimate end, hardly anyone realises that anything is wrong. It is all accepted as part of the normal scheme of things, like the laws of the Medes and the Persians.

As compared with the past, the process today is telescoped into a few years. It can therefore be far more easily noted, checked and controlled than, say, in the days of ancient Egypt, when dissolution and decay may have taken well over a thousand years to reach finality.

Today, we can see before our eyes, in the career of one American film company alone, how the small "boring from within" disruptive tendencies enter in and then gradually become bigger and more, year after year, until we get "Dorian Gray." We can see also that this gradual mounting up has a parallel effect upon other film makers and film audiences until the latter become so addicted to the

treatment that they can be made to absorb evil without even being fully aware that it is evil.

Yet despite this marked development in recent years, the primal, healthy tendencies in the American film industry still remain. The American is still the dominant as the world film. Even M.G.M. during the very period under discussion gave us "Mrs. Miniver," which was as gracious and generous an American tribute to England in war-time, as "Dorian Gray" was a denigration, distortion and calumny of English morals and manners. And just as "Mrs. Miniver" would make for cohesion between our two nations and mutual respect, so is "Dorian Gray" designed (whether intended or not by the makers makes no difference) to sow distrust and disrespect between us, and even loathing among the peoples of the world for this alleged English way of life and thought.

To explain how this has come about it is only right that we should offer the reader a picture of some of the subconscious ingredients that were present in both British and American films at about the beginning of the anti-Nazi war.

A great many events that have since occurred in the realm of reality will become increasingly clear by reference to what was being propagated among the people on the plane of the subconscious. It will, therefore, be of interest to examine a rather lavish film of the pre-war period, "The Four Feathers," made by Alexander Korda from the story by A. E. W. Mason. It may be interesting to note here that A. E. W. Mason stems from approximately the same literary generation as Wilde, Beardsley, Shaw, etc.

This film followed Korda's "The Drum," which we described in *The Film Answers Back*. But it represents a steeper decline from that film into negative, Sadist, dream consciousness. For, as we have noted previously, films of this type tend to increase rather than diminish their negative characteristics with each succeeding production by the same makers, and Korda's work has proved no exception to the rule. "The Four Feathers" is as much a worsening of "The Drum" as the Charles Laughton-Pommer production in England of "Jamaica Inn" was a worsening of Laughton's "Vessel of Wrath" (see *The Film Answers Back*), or as Bette Davis' "Dark Victory" was to "Jezebel."

This noticeable downward decline into steeper negativism was not only evident in Britain, but also in certain tributaries in the main stream of American output and in the general output of the Soviet Union. The world-wide mental atmosphere during the heyday of Nazism may be gauged—and to some extent recorded—from the type of film with which some of the more intellectualised film producers were feeding the peoples of the world.

The story of "The Four Feathers" starts, not as in "The Drum," in 1888, but in 1885, with the news that reaches the aristocratic Feversham household in England that General Gordon has been

killed at Khartoum. The Fevershams belong to a long line of military commanders stretching over centuries, and the present head, Colonel Feversham, is perturbed and dismayed because his fifteen-year-old son and heir, instead of displaying the soldier-like qualities of his ancestors, is said to be "soft" and he "reads Shelley." There is a re-union at the home of the Fevershams, at which the big-wig military friends of the Colonel are present to celebrate the birthday of the youth. The father appeals to his cronies to help him "lick the boy into shape," to "make him hard." The dinner party which follows, at which the young Feversham occupies the seat of honour, is punctuated with veteran speeches and reminiscences deliberately told to curdle the blood of the fifteen-year-old boy, who sits there with horror and discomfiture visibly growing upon him.

The old fellows vie with each other in telling stories of the time when "war was war" and "men were men" and "there was no room for weaklings." How such and such a one braved all odds and was "shot to pieces at the head of his men." How another had his arm blown off: "spoilt his cricket, you know!" Of another: a Cossack's lance went in at the back of his neck and came out at the front." Another was scalped by Indians. Another disgraced his family—father disowned him—"there's no place in England for a coward."

After revelling imaginatively in all this sweat and gore, the assembled are suddenly reminded of the occasion upon which they are met and they drink the health of the unhappy boy. When it is time for him to go to bed, the boy bids good-night to the company, and with a lighted candle in his hand, looks fearfully around him as he passes on his way upstairs, past gleaming coats of mail and magnificent portraits of his martial ancestors in warlike poses peering at him fiercely. He is recalled quite suddenly by Dr. Sutton, who was present at the gathering. He introduces himself to the boy as a friend of his dead mother, and he asks that he should always communicate with him—Dr. Sutton—whenever he needs help. The boy gratefully accepts the doctor's card.

Ten years elapse, and we see the same Harry Feversham, now a commissioned officer in a Surrey Regiment, becoming engaged to Ethne Burroughs, whose father is also the head of a famous old military family. This father is a particularly interesting study, played by C. Aubrey Smith. A fiery old martinet, he is fond of using every occasion for telling his famous story about how he ordered the 68th to go forward at the battle of Balaelava: "The Russians . . . —he grabs a handful of walnuts and sets them out in a line—" . . . guns, guns, guns." He dips his finger in the glass of red wine and draws it across the polished dinner table—"the thin red line." When he comes to "myself" in the disposition of forces, nothing less than a great big juicy pineapple will serve as an identification!

Shortly after the ceremonial engagement of Lieutenant Feversham

to Miss Burroughs, the Surrey Regiment is ordered to go to Kitchener's help at Khartoum. To the consternation of his fellow officers and his veteran father-in-law, Harry Feversham resigns his commission to avoid being sent abroad; his explanation being that he only joined the Army for his father's sake and now that his father is dead he has no further allegiances. He is prepared to sacrifice the interests of his country for the more noble cause of "saving an estate that's near to ruin." That is one excuse. The other is that he wishes to be "released from the life of an imposter." His fiancee, Ethne, reminds him that we are not free: we were born into a tradition and we must obey it. The pride and happiness of all those around us depend upon obedience.

Harry Feversham receives a package containing three cards from his former comrades-in-arms, who are now on their way to the Sudan. To each of these cards is attached a white feather—symbol of cowardice. Harry then says there shall be one more, and handing an ostrich feather to his fiancee, asks her to give it to him. She refuses. Ethne's father comes in at this point and is so outraged at the sight of Harry that he, with studied subtlety, opens the window to let the smell out. Later, in conversation with Dr. Sutton, he says of Harry: "The man who tries to cheat his fate is more than a coward—he is a fool."

Following this there is a very curious incident. The benevolent Dr. Sutton, who, ten years earlier, had promised the boy Harry that he would help him in a difficulty, sees the disgraced Harry in his room and *places a revolver on the mantelpiece*, saying that he is sure Harry will not use it on himself. What on earth is the idea? If there is one thing that a doctor should know, it is that Harry, in that distraught frame of mind, would only need the slightest tip of the scales to do the very thing the doctor says he will not do. Instead of using his doctor's knowledge of psychopathology to remove any possibility of an irrevocable act, Dr. Sutton goes out of his way to do the exact opposite!

One would expect that kind of gesture from a paradox-affected Romantic, but not from a doctor—and a friend. Harry, however, gets the drift of all this social ostracism and decides he will vindicate himself. He'll show 'em. And he goes to Egypt. We are not told beforehand what exactly Harry Feversham's idea is. He does not attempt to vindicate himself by re-joining his regiment and suborning his talents to an organised, collective effort. Nothing so ordinary and commonsensical. He will show the world that his own unaided, unguided, unprovisioned, unorganised and harrowingly painful efforts will be as good as anything the whole British Army can do. Typical dream wish-fulfilment thinking.

Arriving in Egypt, he calls upon a doctor (what, another?). who tells him that his destination is about 400 miles away, and that there is only one way of getting there—by joining a group of native coolies, who will be towing the boats carrying the regiment up and

across the Nile river and rapids. Harry knows no Arabic and has no protection. So he conceives the idea of being branded like a Sengali, as a member of the tribe that has been punished by a conqueror, by having the tongue cut out and the forehead branded. Harry imagines that the brand will be sufficient and that no one will trouble to look into his mouth to see if he has a tongue. No harrowing detail of the branding ceremony is omitted in the film: the red-hot iron, the slow approach to sensitive skin, the tremblings, the holdings, the excruciating pain, the smile of Sadist triumph on the lips of the executioner, and then the limp figure of the exhausted Harry.

Entertainment? Uplift? Amusement? No. Then why is it in the film?

When the scar is healed, there is a rehearsal. Harry Feversham play-acts the part for which he got himself mangled, to see if he can pass himself off as a Sengali in front of an Arab. It would appear from Harry's performance that one of the attributes of the Sengali is a spasmodic trembling, a tic, with the head held at a side like a man with a spinal complaint.

This idea of the spoilation of the head of a man, subjecting it and the nervous system to desecration and torture, is substantially the same as the Shaw concept in "Cæsar and Cleopatra" on the cutting-off of heads and hands. The close affinity is understandable in view of the common literary background origin.

Following upon the rehearsal, Harry Feversham, this scion of an aristocratic family, who all his life had been brought up in comfort and security, is seen going through it with further excruciating detail. He is among native coolies, a coolie himself, tugging at an interminable long rope, hauling white-sailed boats up the Nile, to the cracking of whips by brawny Negro overseers, and again, as in the stories we have heard of the German camps, the whole of these performances are flavoured with "Romantic" music. The whips crack rhythmically, like musical instruments, upon human backs, through the deep chants of the massed slave chorus.

Continually and persistently, we see the whips descend now upon this man, now upon that, and upon the back of Harry Feversham, coolie. Straining and sweating and suffering, set to choral music, associating the pleasure principle with the depths of pain and humiliation for the mass audience in the cinema to imbibe.

Suddenly, Harry submerges in the river. No one takes any notice of his disappearance and nobody misses him. He finds his way across the desert to where one of his former colleagues, played by Ralph Richardson, is encamped with his company for the night. Scene: dead of night, vast expanse of desert and rock. Harry's friend, the officer in command, is in his tent, asleep. All are asleep except the sentries. The officer had been blinded by sunstroke the day before when, while climbing a rock alone, he lost his sun helmet.

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He could easily have saved himself from calamity if he had had the sense to cover his head with his coat. But then, if he had been sensible, the dream-author of this story might have unfolded the story somewhat more in keeping with objectivity and reality, and the dream-conscious producer of this film would have made it a little more in keeping with common sense and the authenticity that this film is told, and that's the way it is. A dreamer dreams the way real world ever enters into dream imaginings.

Around these sleepers, gradually creeping up (like the White Army creeping up to the sleeping Reds in "Chapaicv") are the blood-curdling Sudancse Dervishes and "Fuzzie-Wuzzies," avid for slaughter. How this man Feversham, dressed as a coolie, pretending to be an outeast who cannot speak or even understand Arabie, finds himself at this precise spot, hundreds of miles from his point of departure, at this precise moment of his friend's peril in the desert, having got there without compass, food or guide, can only be explained in the one way that makes it explicable—it happens thus in a dream.

Just as the Dervishes are about to sling themselves upon the sleeping men at close quarters. Harry raises a warning "Hulloa!" (he couldn't do it a few minutes earlier!). There is a dashing about in the camp (again very much as in "Chapaicv"), bugles blow, and the blind captain finds his way about, miraculously directing the battle, while the fiction is conveyed that nobody in the company realises that their commanding officer is blind. The camp, which is surrounded for protection with layers of brushwood, is set on fire (where does brushwood come from in the desert?), is set on fire with flaming torches by the Dervishes, and the soldiers fight against a blazing background beautifully stratified in layers, for the convenience of the Technicolor photographers.

Miraculously again, judged by mundane standards, out of this battle, where every one of the men dies, the officers are captured and are dragged along on the ground, tied by their hands to camels and horses. But amidst all this desolation and torture and chaos, amidst the bones being picked by flocks of screeching vultures, the captain's tent flutters crest and intact. The blind and wounded captain stirs and is comforted by the one other miraculous survivor, the Sengali Harry Feversham. Harry drags the captain to his tent, in spite of the general conflagration. The captain comes to his tent, and begins to realise his position: "Where am I? Answer me!" he calls, as he touches Harry, but Harry remains dumb. Rather than comfort a blind, wounded and distracted man by speaking to him with a voice which will be familiar and comforting, Harry prefers to realise his childish dream-conscious ambition and comfort him with a voice which Desert, desolation, death, suffering, blindness, dumbness, thirst in the heat of the sun, vultures feeding, blind and coyotes howling. In the words of the distracted officer: "A blind man and a dumb lunatic, with nothing left but to die of thirst."

As the coolie, Feversham leads the blind man by a rod through the desert, the vultures rise from picking the bones of their comrades. The shadows of the vultures fall upon them all the way, and they stagger and fall into cracked mud where once had been pools of water. Eventually, they reach a river. Where the provisions came from during this sojourn is not indicated. Nor do we see where the raft came from, upon which Feversham places the captain to navigate him along the river for miles, without a word being spoken. It all happens—just happens—out of a void—miraculously—as in a dream. Beautiful Technicolor sunset on the Nile, Technicolor night, Technicolor expanses of water, the head of a hippopotamus emerging, and the hand of the wounded, prostrate captain, trailing in the water.

Beaching the raft, close to a British post, Feversham takes the pocket-book from his still prostrate friend, and takes from it an envelope, into which he returns the card with the white feather. (On the card, Feversham has written a postscript, we are told long afterwards, though we never see it happen in the film.) While doing this, Feversham is captured by the soldiers from the post, who have spotted him, and he is sent to work as a coolie on the roads. The blind captain tells the soldiers: "A solitary Arab saved me. Heaven knows where he came from, or why."

Precisely. That is how things always happen in a dream.

Suddenly again, the other two donors of white feathers, Willoughby and Durrance, who have been captured by the "Fuzzic-Wuzzies" and are being dragged through a native street in a cage, surrounded by howling Dervishes, are surreptitiously approached by the miraculously ubiquitous Feversham. He pulls out a flute from his wide Arab sleeve (in the manner of Donald Duck in "The Band Concert") and plays a native tune (although he knows no Arabic!). As he gets closer to the two Englishmen imprisoned in the cage, they see the words inscribed upon the flute: "Don't despair."

Again, without any link connecting him with the situation, Feversham is in prison with the Englishmen at Omdurman, and he hands them a sixpenny file with which to free themselves. This happens while they are drinking with their noses in the river, after having been fed from troughs, as in the Bible story of the Prodigal Son. Feversham is observed and is taken to the Caliph, who wants to know if Feversham knows anything about Kitchener's army. Feversham remains dumb and will not speak. The Caliph says: "We'll flog you till you do."

There follows a regular orgy of flogging, with the Caliph enjoying himself immensely as he watches the performance, a Sadist smile from ear to ear, and eyes bulging with delight as he gasps with the rhythm of the descending whip. After this incident, the Caliph seems to lose all further interest in Feversham. For the dreamer, the incident finishes abruptly. We see Feversham back

again among all the other British prisoners, in a torture chamber, with men hanging by their arms and suffering other barbarities.

Outside the prison, the Caliph's army, on horseback and with spears, is attacking the British formed in a square and firing away at the attackers. The Arabs come back, obligingly, again and again, to be potted off with ease, as in the dream-conscious film, "Beau Geste." In the prison, meantime, Harry Feversham, with his speech regained, leads a revolt among the prisoners and overcomes the guards, having cut everybody's chains with the previously mentioned sixpenny file. When the British army comes up to their relief, they haul down the flag of the Caliphate and search for a white sheet to haul up in its place, when something even better for the purpose turns up, right there in the heart of the Caliphate citadel—a Union Jack—yes, as in a dream, and up it goes to the mast!

All this pain, Sadism, masochism, torture, misery, blindness, thirst, death and destruction—for what? So that Harry Feversham may have the child-dream-conscious satisfaction of returning four feathers to their respective donors.

Contemporary with "The Four Feathers," made in Britain, there was an extraordinarily similar film, similar in its negative dream characteristics, produced by Hal Roach in America, distributed here by United Artists. Hal Roach is known as the producer of many of the Laurel and Hardy comedy films during their hey-day, and some of the attitudes and "business" of the Laurel and Hardy series are to be found in this more serious piece of work, "Captain Fury." The locale of the story is Australia in its early pioneer days, and the leading characters are as follows:

Arnold Trist: the wicked squire, like the wicked squire in the contemporary "Jamaica Inn," the Caliph in "The Four Feathers," and many others.

Captain Fury: Irish rebel, transported convict, with others, to Australia. The Romantic, individualist liberator type made famous by Byron.

Duprez: Ammonite farmer, religious sectarian. "What is destined, shall be."

Duprez's daughter: the heroine. As in most stories and films of this type, she appears as the *only woman* among any number of male contenders. (See especially Ethne Burroughs in "The Four Feathers," and in the Shaw output.)

Blackie: the fighting, bullying type.

There is also the coughing, consumptive type, often to be met with in Romantic dream-conscious narratives. In this film the part is played by John Carradine, noted for his negative Sadist rôles in other films.

Translate Trist's name from the French and we have "sad." This character is certainly the prototype of the French advocate of sub-

human behaviour, the Marquis de Sade, and the name is therefore extremely apt. He exploits, oppresses and starves the convicts whose labour he gets gratis. Nothing is too low for him to stoop to to gain his own ends in this Australian colony, miles away from the control of the English home Government. When the picture opens, he is engaged in harassing the settlers in the valley where he lives, to drive them out so that he can claim the land as his own. Their cattle will be driven off and their cabins burned down, he tells them, if they do not move out.

A new convoy of prisoners is drafted to him from England and among them are the chief prisoner characters mentioned above. Assembled in their shack, Blackie, the bully of the team (played by Victor McLaglen), asserts his claim to be the "head man around here," and challenges all and sundry who may wish to dispute it. Captain Fury accepts the challenge and fights him, but the fight ends in a draw as the overseer bounces in, brandishing a whip. Blackie assures him that they were only having some friendly relaxation, and the overseer goes off, muttering threats.

At the sheep-shearing, one of the prisoners has left a comic, woolly design upon the backs of his sheep. Trist and the overseer pin the offence upon Blackie, and he is led away to be whipped. Captain Fury thereupon steps forward to claim that he did it, and the sentence is visited upon Fury. With a quick turn, Fury escapes to the cabin of one of the harried settlers. Upon hearing of their trouble, he offers to release his comrades and to protect the settlers from the depredations of Trist's men. Two evictions are attempted by Trist and his underlings, but both are frustrated by Captain Fury and his fellow convicts, whom he has organised as a fighting band.

Trist lays a trap and catches Fury's men, who, on this occasion, are led by Fury's deputy, the impetuous Blackie, but when Fury arrives the tables are turned again.

Duprez, the farmer, in his Ammonite religious zeal, disapproves of Captain Fury and his methods, even though they may lead to beneficent results in freeing the settlers from the tyrannies of Trist. He approaches Trist with an offer to betray Captain Fury. Trist listens to his story, and when he has wormed all the information he needs, orders Duprez to be imprisoned, and Duprez is led away, shouting in his indignation.

Duprez, anxious to be liberated, offers the jailer a bribe of £100 if he will release him. The jailer asks, "Where from?" Duprez, in his innocence, tells him. "Thanks for the tip," says the jailer, and goes to Duprez's house in search of the money. As he is looking around, Blackie enters, knocks the fellow out and pockets the money himself. As the jailer, lying on the ground, comes to his senses, he grabs, half-dazed, at a table cloth and pulls down the lighted oil lamp. The wooden cabin is set on fire, and the man's charred body is afterwards found in the ruins.

In the meantime, Captain Fury has again been captured by Trist, who has arranged for a trial at which the Governor, who is visiting the province with his entourage, will preside. The charge is burning the house of Duprez and murder of the man whose body was found in the ruins. The Governor, on hearing the true facts about Trist's treatment of the prisoners and the scorners, pronounces a pardon, and Fury is then free to marry Duprez's daughter.

The symbolism of the names of the characters, and the rôles they play, is worth noting. Trist—sad, is the perfect image of the famed de Sade, carrying cruelty to the point of enjoying it for its own sake. Captain Fury, the liberator against grievous wrongs, the traditional Robin Hood type. Duprez's daughter is revered as the Madonna. In this film she displays the same dream-conscious characteristics as Mary Yelland in "Jamaica Inn" and Ethne Burroughs in "The Four Feathers."

Duprez is rather a bigot, who, though on the side of goodness, allows his one-track logic to lead him to betray Fury, the very person who can carry the ideals of liberty to practical fruition. Duprez seems to bear an unconscious reference to the confusion of opinion among the vast sections of the U.S. population at the time, who were not quite clear about what was happening in Europe, where the super-wicked squire, Hitler, the greatest living exponent of de Sade's philosophy, was threatening all the settlers of Europe, oppressing them and taking their goods and their lands. The problem is solved by a combination of the Byronesque in Captain Fury and the rule of law as pronounced by the Governor.

The film is produced in the negative, dream-conscious, Romantic tradition, and despite its character of straightforward drama, it closely follows the mannerisms of the feature-length Laurel and Hardy vehicle, "Fra Diavolo." In both pictures the photography and background is dark. In both will be seen elongated sequences about execution by hanging. In both there are duckings in ponds and wells. In both, two persons seated on one horse riding for long distances, and other peculiarities of the Hal Roach technique. Much of the dialogue in "Captain Fury" is couched in the flowery language beloved by the decayed Romantics, notably of the Wilde-Shaw school.

Once we realise what are the essentials of the romantic, negative cults, once we detect their derivations from the individual subconscious, it will not come as a surprise to see the turns of the story and the form of the dialogue that follow. There is a considerable emphasis on things, which, as in the German "Golden Age" films, is indicative of a strong sense of property worship; the elaborate, exaggerated dinner table furnishings of Trist's house, and the jailer's search for Duprez's gold. There is also the emphasis upon animals, horses in particular, pigs, calves, cows, emus, sheep, kangaroos and birds. (It will be remembered that Hitler's favourite opera, "Kra-

"Um Iolanthe," was one in which a pig figured prominently. (The Nazi jailers at the concentration camps, as compensation for their inhumanity to men, displayed an exaggerated tenderness to their bird-pets, and on a Belsen furnace there was a picture of a headless S.S. man riding on pig). There is hardly a normal character in the cast except, perhaps, Duprez's daughter, and towards the end, the Governor. There is the typical gesture common to the eighteenth century Sadists, also to be observed in "Jamaica Inn," that of finnick refinement coupled with a descent to the depths of bestiality and cunning, as, for instance, Trist ostentatiously smelling a beautiful flower while ordering his overseer to give the prisoners water—plenty of water, but very little bread. There is the tubercular prisoner who exercises some curious Sadist tricks upon his opponents. The drinking and feeding out of communal troughs depicted here seems to emphasise a subconscious desire to drag mankind down and to degrade him to captive animal status. Among the Shavian Romantics, the same hidden desire is expressed in various other ways. There are several instances of beating. There is also the extension of the ego by means of the extra power a saddled horse provides: "A good horse beneath me and a gun to defend myself with!" cries Captain Fury, when he offers to liberate his fellow convicts to help the settlers.

When we study these characteristics in "Captain Fury" and the related tendencies in the comedy, "Fra Diavolo," the mystery begins to clear as to why Hal Roach was so deeply involved with Mussolini in negotiations to improve upon the ineritable mess into which the Italian film industry had sunk under Mussolini's auspices. Roach, of course, could not do much, and nothing came of the negotiations, but that there were negotiations may be significant.

We come now to another interesting American film of a negative character which made its appearance at about the same time. The Shavian paradox is evident from the title, "Dark Victory," since victory is usually associated with brightness and triumph.

The story of "Dark Victory" has certain elements very much like those in "The Vessel of Wrath." In the latter, the woman missionary's father, we are told, had drunk himself to death. The father of Judith Trahearne, the Bette Davis character in "Dark Victory," does the same. Laughton's familiarity as Ginger Ted with the women on the island is paralleled by Judith's reckless behaviour as "the town's girl." Ginger Ted drinks; so does Judith. There is the reclamation of Ginger Ted by the lady missionary, and the reclamation of Judith by the gentleman doctor. The emphasis upon sex, in the D. H. Lawrence manner, is noticeable in both films. This feature is familiar in films that stem from the West End stage, but we see the identical tendency raising its head in the American film. It would seem certain that the adulation of French and German films has helped to encourage United States producers along this path. Films like "Remous" and "Baiser de feu à Naples" and "L'Atalante"

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are, no doubt, the type of film that Val Gielgud considers "adult. for adults," in contradistinction to his estimate of the non-French Hollywood product as being made by "morons for morons." But "Dark Victory" pleased the critics as no American film had before.

At any rate, "Dark Victory" evoked in London a reception of speechless awe and admiration. No doubt the many exalted disciples of D. H. Lawrence enjoyed the verbal allusions that form part of the Romantic cults. "I'd give my body to save her," says the doctor, when Judith Trahearne is given ten months to live. After the operation for the removal of the growth on the brain, the glioma, Judith dresses herself in her most seductive clothes, the better to mesmerise the doctor with. (Patients nearly always fall in love with their psycho-analysts.)

At one point, when the doctor arrives, she says, saucily and with a Gioconda smile: "Thanks for taking two inches off my middle."

"Dark Victory" is consistent in its all-pervading sense of frustration, in its insistence upon disease and upon the alleged cruelty of nature. (The authentic "cosmic" de Sade philosophy.) This pampered rich girl, Judith, is afflicted with sudden headaches and by aberrations of vision. In spite of this, she puts up every sort of childish opposition in refusing to be examined by specialists. At last she consents and the trouble is diagnosed as being due to a malignant growth on the brain—a glioma. (Pirandello's post-1918 play, "The Man with the Flower in his Mouth," dealt with a similar subject.) After much argument, she decides to take with a similar doctor and have the operation that may save her life. Before the anaesthetic is administered, preparatory to giving the general and the doctor eventually drapes one round her. The implied symbolism is clear.

A cross-section of the growth is examined and all the experts agree that "the prognosis is negative." They decide that the patient has only ten months to live before being stricken by blindness and death. (Note, as in the contemporary English film, "The Four Feathers," the emphasis upon blindness, torture, death.) The doctors agree in consultation that Judith is to be shielded from all knowledge of the sad results of the diagnosis, and her friends conspire to "make happy every hour." They ask: "What has she ever done that this should happen to her?"

That question in the minds of millions of Germans in 1919 was given the precise form and the precise expression in "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari." The same pre-occupation with doctors, diseased brains, lunatic behaviour, cold destruction and unmerited death, as in the wanton sentence of death upon the young man, "You shall die before midnight." (Death and the time concept in significant linkage. Hitler always used to talk about five minutes to twelve or five past twelve.)

One of the aspects of the Romantic cult of anti-sociality is a distinct deterioration in the social instincts. In the absence of social, human values, abstract time values begin to dominate. "Dark Victory" is particularly conspicuous by this accent on time. "Ten months to live." "She must be made happy *every hour*." "Time, do you ever think of time? You can almost hear it go by." "Mustn't go to sleep, time doesn't sleep." "That song about time, I want to have it again." (There are similar expressions in "A Matter of Life and Death".)

The song of time in the film goes something like this:

Give me time,
Be gay today,
Oh give me time,
To hold your hand,
To understand,
Oh give me time.

If she had been thinking of anybody but her own egotistical self, Judith would never have fallen back on this time concept. A socially-minded person, with a fortune at her command, would have crammed all the social impulses of a lifetime into the ten months that were left to her, but this ego-centric, self-centred, irresponsible "town's girl" turns like a tigress upon those who tried to protect her and rends them with her tongue. (The leading Nazis would often express their gratitude to their subordinates and assistants by destroying them.)

Among other things, Judith asks:

"How's the mortality rate?" (Not "How's the birth rate?")

"How are you getting on with the knives?"

She starts out on a reckless career of debauchery and determines to take "all their husbands and sweethearts." (Like Dr. Goebbels and Mussolini, she could "have anybody.") As the "town's girl," she is a cross between the Vampire woman and the exalted prostitute of the mid-eighteenth century, Romantic de Sade cults. And when she has tasted all that the denial of her social instincts will give her, and she still is as miserable as ever, she descends to descend to the stable to have converse with her stable hand. This episode may be profitably examined in the light of the fashionable cults of decay. The language between the two is widely to be found in Byron, de Sade, Wilde, Baudelaire, Flaubert, Goethe, Schiller and Swinburne. The set-up should be familiar to students of D. H. Lawrence, in particular his "Lady Chatterley's Lover."

The ostensible reason for Judith's visit to the stables is the illness of her horse, "Jessica's Girl," which has bronchitis, but the action is taken up mainly with the exchanges between the stable hand (played by Humphrey Bogart) and Judith, in the course of which Judith is forcibly embraced. The conversation clearly reveals the sub-

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conscious symbolism which Freud has explained with immense detail. The stable hand motions her to an inner part of the stable: "There's a fire in there, won't you go in and warm yourself!" She goes in. He shuts the door and puts wood on the fire.

"Talk to me." (About a race she has won.)
The stable-hand: "There's something when you ride that puts my heart into my mouth."

She: "I had to show the gentry I've got what it takes."

He (later): "You've got to have action in your life, same as I have to have action in mine."

She: "We've always talked about horses. I should have lived in days when it counted to be a man . . . when you could ride and fight?" . . . but what does it get you these days—riding and fighting?"

She (as the conversation warms up): "Are you afraid to burn, Michael? Are you afraid to die?" Michael then embraces her and when she pretends she does not want him to, he protests: "I'm as good as some of them that's been playing around with you—is it because I am a stable-hand?"

Then Judith again, later: "No, I can't just die like this. I'm going to die in a few months time—oh, I'm all shot." Fade to Judith running out to her house and upstairs to her own bedroom. Taken in the context of the preceding dialogue and action, the running upstairs acquires particular significance in the dream symbolism as explained by Freud. From everything that occurs, it is obvious that the stable hand has been made a lover, although it is never specifically stated or indicated in the film.

Now, having run the gamut of all the experiences possible to her, having enjoyed all that is abnormal, and predatory, and parasitical in her sex relationships, Judith turns to self-pity. "I'm tired, so tired," she says, as she gets into bed. She rings up the doctor. Dr. Steele, at an unearthly hour in the morning, and asks, innocently: "Would I be wrong if I made it happy—the waiting day and night?" "Who's calling at this hour?" asks the doctor.

They meet the following day and there is much significant conversation, which ends with her saying: "I want a real wedding—white frock and orange blossom." In a normal girl this would be a normal desire, but here it acquires the significance of Jezebel's insistence on the red dress, Frou-Frou's yearning for the white dress with pink rose-buds, Squire Pengallion's finery in "Captain Fury," and Field-Marshal Goering's extraordinary penchant for extraordinary uniforms.

Next we see the couple, married, settled snugly in their home in Vermont. Judith is taking the letters from the post-box and a countryman passes by. "How's the sciatica?" she asks him. Still

the same Judith, doing whatever is forbidden. She deliberately carries the dinner tray for her husband from the house into his laboratory, and so wrecks his experiment. He protests at her barging in like this: "You're crawling with microbes." Judith's secretary-companion comes into the room. They are talking together when Judy exclaims: "There's a storm coming—it's clouding up." "It's getting darker every minute."

The husband receives a request to deliver a lecture to a learned society in New York upon his discoveries. Suddenly, the young wife, Judith, who has lived for herself every minute of her life, decides to make a dramatic exit. The husband wishes to stay with her and forgo the lecture. She insists that he shall go to New York to deliver his lecture for the benefit of mankind, and she will stay and die alone. Half blind, she puts on a fine show, and even helps her husband to pack his bags. She trips merrily down the stairs, while the doctor husband, we are made to believe, never even suspects that she is already blind and that death is imminent. (The same fiction as in "The Four Feathers," where the soldiers are supposedly unaware that their commander has gone blind.)

There is here, too, the same preoccupation with death, coupled with aloneness, darkness and self-pity, which we have observed in the Soviet films of the same period. Though the ingredients are the same, they merely assume different forms in different countries. Judith, alone with her secretary while the husband is out of the room, says: "That's our victory—our victory over the dark."

Then Judith speaks to her secretary in the garden: "Have you planted the hyacinths yet? I must help you to plant them—they're his favourite flower."

This is a clear dream identification with herself as the earth, as also are the following half soliloquies:

"You will water my flowers, won't you?"

"And you'll take care of my doctor, won't you?"

"Never leave him, will you?"

"I'm happy, really I am."

"If Challenger wins the National, have a party for all our friends. Give them champagne and be gay, be very gay."

These snatches of conversation are to be interpreted, in the Freudian sense, as the self-identification of Judith, firstly with the earth—what the hyacinth bulbs planted therein portend will be obvious; secondly, with her companion-secretary; and thirdly, with her horse Challenger. She will live on in all three when they are gay, gay, very gay. More soliloquies:

"I must go in now."

"No one must be here."

"I'm going to lie down: I must show him I can die alone."

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She ascends the stairs; her two dogs follow her. (Note accent on animals.) After caressing them, she sends them away. Lies down on the bed. Maid draws blind and covers her up with a quilt. Her form becomes blurred. She dies.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

WE HAVE SEEN from all the foregoing that there is usually an extraordinary unanimity all over the world, due to the common prevalence of the de Sade cults and the general depression which was the mark of the years before 1939. It is also due to the closeness with which nations are now linked in communication and the speed with which ideas can now travel. This display of a certain kind of uniformity in the expression of the sub-conscious in films came at a moment in history when the struggle between negative and positive, good and evil, was again about to be resolved in the real world, in the war against Nazidom. However that war may have differed from previous wars in externals and in the material aspects, the core fundamental issue was the same as in all wars. That many people reading history have not yet been able to detect that core makes no difference. The core is there if it is searched for deep enough.

The films of the time, that were addicted to sub-conscious rather than conscious, introspective rather than objective forms of presentation, were also curiously alike in others respects, both in Britain and America. For instance:

There appeared a group of films at that time which, although they all differed widely in character, contained in a lesser or greater degree the idea of the classroom. The school classroom appears in "The Vessel of Wrath," "The Housemaster," "South Riding," "Prison Without Bars" and in the Will Hay "Convict 99," all contemporary with each other. This tendency had its counterpart in the emergence of the two "Boys' Town" films—"Boy of the Streets" and "Dead End" from America.

If we examine this subconscious unanimity a little closer we discover an even more surprising affinity between films which, on the surface, would seem to be of the most divergent character. For instance, when the Laughton-Pommer productions, which were intended by the makers to be taken seriously are compared with the Will Hay comedy films of the same period, a number of remarkable similarities begin to emerge.

There is not the slightest reason for supposing that there was any deliberate interchange of ideas between these two groups of film

makers, and yet we find corresponding characteristics in the Laughton-Pommer "Vessel of Wrath" and the Will Hay "Convict 99." The first named tells the story of Ginger Ted, who finds himself cooped up on an island where there is a school, booze and women. In the latter, Will Hay finds himself cooped up in a prison in mistake of being cooped up in a school and where the prisoners indulge in similar "enjoyments." In both films the money for these indulgences comes by way of wish fulfilment. In the one a monthly remittance from a hazy source, and in the second by way of a staged bank robbery by the temporary prison governor (Will Hay).

A few months later, Laughton-Pommer make "Jamaica Inn," and Will Hay makes the comedy, "Ask a Policeman." In the first named there is the Jekyll and Hyde type, Squire Pengallion, played by Mr. Laughton. He lives near the coast, a super-smuggler who remains in the background while the smuggling goes on under his direction. In the Will Hay comedy there is a squire, who, too, remains in the background in apparent respectability while he directs the smuggling traffic undetected. In the Laughton picture much of the action takes place in cellars, and amid sea spray near the beach, and there is "business" about signalling from the shore to sea in the dead of a stormy, windy night.

Ditto, ditto and ditto in the Will Hay comedy, "Ask a Policeman."

In the Laughton picture there is great play with a coach and four horses driving through mists in the countryside. In the Will Hay picture, although it is about our own day, there appears a coach and four horses, supposed to be a ghost outfit, with a *headless* driver. It turns out to be a real coach used by smugglers! There are any number of other similarities, and both pictures end by their respective squires, disgraced, coming to a sticky end.

Thus we find that where the school appears in English and American productions, we find it prevalent in both comedy and drama. The school, to some extent, represents social effort, collective effort under controlled leadership in the social sub-conscious. The preponderance of coaches, and especially of horses, would indicate rather a regression from the social to the individual ego as the centre of activity. We get a clue to their significance in the outburst of Captain Fury, when he exclaims, with a fine gesture: "A good horse beneath me and a gun to defend myself with . . ."

The power of an individual, and consequently of the ego, is undoubtedly expanded over his followers or his fellows when that individual is seated upon a horse. The fellow creature beneath him gives him added physical power for endurance in combat and in travelling distances at a fast pace. It offers him an immense physical and emotional advantage over one who has to use his legs only for locomotion. The hero-rider and the wicked rider has the same significance in the social sub-conscious, and has the same origin as the

concept of the Centaur, the top half man and the lower half horse in the mythology of earlier civilisations. A decline in the social subconscious towards introspection or Romanticism would, therefore, undoubtedly find one of its expressions in the widespread concept of the horse and rider. Wireless and inter-communication has made the world so much more of a closer unity, that we find the same thought or sense processes expressing themselves in the same way everywhere.

In England, the coaches and horses in the films we have discussed find a variant in that dashing about on horses and camels in "The Four Feathers." In "South Riding," a woman rides a horse up a staircase in the manor house, and in "Jamaica Inn" the smuggling squire trots a horse into the dining room where all the guests are seated. During the same period America gave us "Stage Coach" with identical ingredients, a coach and horses and horsed riders galloping at full speed. There are fast-moving horsed riders of the hero-rider type (not to be confused with the conventional cowboy type) in the American film, "Union Pacific," where there is a travelling rail-coach, also in "Wuthering Heights," "Beau Geste," "Jesse James" and, of course, "Captain Fury." In "Dark Victory" Judith is seen in a beautifully tailored riding outfit and there is much riding of horses, racing of horses and discussion of men and horses.

That frontiers no longer exist can be seen in this, that we see the same undue preoccupation with men dashing about on horses in the Soviet Union in films like "Peter the Great" and "Alexander Nevsky," both made at the same time as the films we have named from England and America.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

SUCH WAS THE FRAME OF MIND of certain film makers in Britain, the Soviet Union and in America at about the time the preconscious or the subconscious, in the shape of the Nazi power, was holding Europe in thrall, and the stage was being set for those mental afflictions to be purged in bloody war. But, as we have seen, though the active instincts of free men in the Anglo-Saxon world were in favour of throwing out those evil influences, there were other forces within our camp who, in the realm of the idea, sought by every means in their power to uphold the Sadist, subconscious, "Romantic" influence upon the minds of the people. These were the makers of the films we have described and also the open advocates for German and French films, and ideas of the Lejeune school before 1940, and since.

Intensively and persistently, throughout the war years, despite the active and positive efforts of millions of American people to purge the world of evil, there crept in through the back door of the subconscious those same evil thought processes in the American film that had been the ruin of Europe. The process is so minutely gradual and subtle, the soft-footed creeping is done so quietly from one film production to the next, that the Hays office at the end passes a film like "The Picture of Dorian Gray." Even Hays had not taken the trouble to study the script properly, or to examine the genesis of the story and the background social atmosphere from which that story emerged.

There is nothing new in this. It has all happened before. Even the Christian Church, with the finest code of human conduct in the world, lapsed quite badly at the time of the Borgia Popes. And the cleansing process of the Protestant Reformation had to come from this island to put an end to the decay. That is why the initiative for a cleansing process in films will again have to come from Britain.

What was the background of "Dorian Gray" and how did it come to be written? We cannot do better than refer the reader to Professor Mario Praz's *The Romantic Agony* (Oxford University Press), a veritable storehouse of the unspeakable that the so-called Romantics and Sadists have given expression to. Praz writes:

The classic of the Decadence in England is "The Picture of Dorian Gray" (first published in *Lippincott's Magazine*, July, 1890), in which the hero, depraved by the reading of French books, professes the practices of pagan hedonism of Gautier's *d'Albert*, refined by the more recent recipes of the des Esseintes. The novel, from the moment of its appearance, was attacked in *The St. James' Gazette*, when "the new voluptuousness which always leads up to blood shedding" was stigmatised.

Oscar Wilde may well have borrowed from Edgar Allan Poe *The Oval Portrait* from Rossetti's *St. Agnes of Intercession*. *The Portrait*, possibly from Maturin, the idea of the enchantment of the portrait, again from Poe (*William Wilson*), and from Robert Louis Stevenson (*The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, 1886) the alarming idea of the hero's double personality.

Oscar Wilde, like all the decayed "Romantics" of his time, sees only in images, not in ideas or morals, but as in a dream, "events which crept with silent blood-stained feet into his brain." Like most exhibitionists who find themselves pilloried, he accepted scandal not unwillingly, and he stayed in this country, though he might easily have left England between his first and second trials. Praz has a great deal more to say on the subject:

The æsthetic ancestry of *Dorian Gray* has been exhaustively studied; it is traceable mainly to *Mademoiselle de Maupin* and *A Rebours* by Flaubert. The work itself, though written in English, really belongs to the French school and must be considered a curious exotic reflection of it. At the risk of fatiguing the reader with one parenthesis inside another, like so many Chinese boxes, I should like to point out in passing how Swinburne's influence introduced into England the French literary tendencies to which he paid homage. Through Swinburne, the younger generation was initiated into the Decadent Movement, and continued the discovery on its own account in defiance of the initiator himself, who grew more temperate with age. He wrote a parody, *The Statue of John Brute* (unpublished) of that same *Dorian Gray*. The essence of the English decadent movement school is contained in the fifty odd pages of Aubrey Beardsley's romantic novel, *Under the Hill* (published in part in *The Savoy* as a posthumous volume in 1904, but the accessible volume is very much expurgated), in which a precious style resembling that of the Hypo-Nerotomachia (from the famous illustrations by Francesco Colonna), of which Beardsley's drawings derived not merely ornamental motifs, but actual technical suggestions.

The reader will gain a good picture of the mental atmosphere in which the decadent school of literature was conceived, from the following:

Of all the monstrosities that pullulate in the fiction of this period, Lesbians are the most popular. *The Marquise de Sade*, by Rachilde (1886), *The Monsters of Paris* and *Monsieur Venus*, the last by Rachilde, who said it was "the most marvellous product of a hysteria which came of a paroxysm of chastity in a vicious milieu."

Here is a glimpse of a contemporary author:

Jean Lorrain was a theoretical Sadist; his fixation was to give himself the airs of a murderer: he combed his hair forward (he dyed his hair red as Baudelaire had dyed his green) to make his forehead look lower and to bring into greater prominence, what Bataille described as "les maximillaires assassins"; he was also attracted by the spectacle of the underworld and did his best to frequent it as much as possible; and he kept always in his sitting room a livid, truncated head made of wax. It was a case of a virility complex in a being of feminine sensibility, a hysterical with homo-sexual tendencies. Assisted by an affectionate mother, this chronic invalid crawled about in the sunshine of Provence, disguised as a werewolf.

The related sense impressions to the werewolf notion are those of vampirism and also to what the French call "faisandage"—a sort of decayed putrescence. These sense impressions are also linked to Nazism and destruction for destruction's sake. Praz says that Swinburne's house was called *Chaumiere de Dolmanee*, from a novel by de Sade, and that the avenue in the garden of the house he named *Avenue de Sade*. He quotes Rothenstein on Lautree:

He wanted to take me to an execution, he was enthusiastic about operations performed before clinical students, and pressed me to join him at the hospital.

Gabrielle D'Annunzio, the closest direct inspirer of the Fascist regime in Italy, speaks in his *Il Piacere* of the "mouths of the tireless and inexorable drinkers of souls." We have here an interesting link with Shaw's obsession with both eating and killing in his "*Cæsar and Cleopatra*." The common expression among ordinary people is that "the eyes are the windows of the soul." But where there is a reversion from the human to the animal, there is a corresponding reversion from the eyes to the mouth. The greatest sensory preoccupations of the animal is obviously about the mouth and food. At the same time, the reversion is not a straightforward return to a lower animal plane, but to a worse and far more decayed level, to parasitism, vampirism and sheer destruction. That explains the manifestations we have seen in our lifetime in the world of reality, in Germany, and in the world of the imagination in print. Hence we observe that when Oscar Wilde left prison, he adopted the name of *Sebastian Melmoth*. The moth is an insect, which is even a further step backward than the animal. It is purely parasitical, using its mouth to tatter our clothes and to destroy. It has thus an associative

link with the notion of the vampire. Whether Wilde adopted Melmoth as his name consciously, or unconsciously, does not matter. What is significant is that he did. What is significant also is that the name Melmoth has been used in French Sadistic literature.

Aubrey Beardsley, who was a friend of Wilde's, died of tuberculosis at Mentone, in France. He illustrated Wilde's *Salome*, which again is an ancient tale, with head-cutting as its leading motif. Praz writes of Beardsley's *Under the Hill* as follows:

In *Under the Hill*, the exquisite Abbé Fanfreluche (Joyee, Lord Haw-Haw, it will be remembered, adopted Freulich as his German name) enters into the mysterious hill where dwells Helen, and is there invited to a magnificent orgy. The story is simply an uninterrupted description of deors before which Fanfreluche goes Poliphilus-like into ecstasies—dress, hair “floral with red roses,” decorative “Terminal gods” abound, quotations from books rare or imaginary (a plea for the domestication of the Unicorn, the Ineffable and Miraculous Life of the Flower of Lima, etc., etc.) and from the operas of Wagner. There is also a description of a ballet, with satyrs and shepherdesses, “The Bacchanals of Sporion,” Sporion being a “tall, slim, depraved young man with a slight stoop, a troubled walk, an oval and impossible face, with its olive skin drawn tightly over the bone, stony scarlet lips, long Japanese eyes and a great gilt toupet. The work is oddly dedicated to the Cardinal Poldi Pezzoli, Nuncio to the Holy See in Nicaragua, by the convert, Aubrey Beardsley, a Catholic of the French decadent type.

The type of Beardsley-Wilde-Shaw Romantic is devoid of any sense of shame, quite studied in insulting religion by offering a work such as *Under the Hill* in dedication to a Christian priest, enjoying thoroughly its incongruity. In the same way Shaw thinks he is conferring a favour upon the British people by heaping insults on their character and religious beliefs. In the same way Powell-Pressburger see nothing, absolutely nothing, insulting or offensive in offering the British people at war “The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp,” in which the enemy is commiserated with and the Englishman made a fool of, or in using the background of Canterbury to tell the tale of a de Sade-Beardsley-Wilde decayed type of mayor in a high position suffering from a variant of the vampire complex, or in openly insulting the British in “A Matter of Life and Death.”

Praz traces out many unsavoury episodes to show that even at that time, long before the establishment of Nazidom in Germany, diseased perversions were being propagated in the real world—and in London. The difference, however, between ourselves and the Germans is that here the social organism was healthy enough to purge itself of the disease, while in Germany the elements of unhealth drove out and destroyed whatever little sanity and normality there was. Praz writes:

Certain scandals about London which were revealed by *The Pall Mall Gazette* in the issues of July 6th, 7th, 8th and 10th, 1885, in a series of articles entitled "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon," in which were exposed the results of an enquiry into youthful prostitution in London. "Padded rooms for the purpose of stifling the cries of the tortured victims of lust and brutality are familiar enough on the Continent" were quoted in *Le Temps*, in *Figaro* and in book form by Dentin in a literal translation in the same year as *Le Scandale de Londres dévoilé par le Pall Mall Gazette*. There were German translations also. (Trust the Germans to pounee on anything like this.) In the issue of September 18th of that year, in the paper *Le Succes*, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam dealt with *Le Sadisme Anglais*, an article which was reprinted later in *Histoires Insolites* and in *Nouveau Contes Cruels*. The artiicles in *The Pall Mall Gazette* had reminded de l'Isle-Adam of a conversation which he had in the spring of the same year with "two young and celebrated English litterateurs," who affected to despise the frivolous nature of French libertinism.

The two English writers are alleged to have told de l'Isle-Adam how much more efficiently the cults of perversion were allegedly practised in secret and well hidden English castles than in France. Praz deduces from the evidence that one of these writers may well have been Wilde. As to *Le Sadisme Anglais*, it is an old Continental custom to saddle England with cults that really have their roots and fount on the Continent, as the long line of practitioners and exponents, from Rabelais to de Sade and beyond to Baudelaire and Flaubert, amply testifies.

"Praz goes deeply into many things that are far too wicked and perverse to be reproduced here, but which he himself quotes in the original French in order to make it less accessible to the commonality. We have only given the barest, the most colourless hint of what really went on at the time that *Dorian Gray* was being written. The reader, however, may be interested in one more quotation as showing not only the genesis of *Dorian Gray*, but also the parallel and more or less contemporary inspiration of Shaw's *Gæsar* and *Cleopatra*; for it must be remembered that Mr. Shaw was a young man in his pristine prime then, lapping up everything and breathing the literary atmosphere of the period:

A contemporary of Swinburne, Arthur O'Shaughnessy (1844-1881) (a countryman of Shaw's it is significant to note), in his *Epic of Women* (1870), parades before us a procession of Fatal Women, instruments of perdition to mankind: Eve, the wife of Hephaestus, Cleopatra, Salome, Helen. And following the example of Baudelaire and Swinburne, he wrote a poem, *To a Young Murderess*, in which recur the delirious accents of Swinburne's Sadistic maniaze:

*"Will you not slay me? Stab me, yea, somehow,
 Deep in the heart: say some foul word at last
 And let me hate you as I love you now,
 Oh, would I might but see you turn and cast
 That false fair beauty that you e'en shall lose
 That crooked loathly viper I shall bruise,
 Through all eternity!"*

In another passage; O'Shaughnessy professes his love for "the passion of purple Nero," a romantic "purple patch" which has now become commonplace.

In both *Dorian Gray* and in Shaw's *Cæsar and Cleopatra* we see clear evidence of contemporary influence. We begin to see where Shaw's expression, "the passion of humanity," came from. If in the Shavian system of thought, good is as good as evil, and greatness is the same as pettiness, peevishness, Sadism and miserliness, we can readily understand how "the passion of purple Nero" came to be mixed up with "the passion of humanity" in Shaw's mind. It is quite easy when you have picked out the threads and sorted out the strands.

From out of that putrescent slime, which we had hoped had been cleansed and forgotten, one of the leading film companies of America, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer fished out *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, to turn into film, for the benefit of millions of people (not mere thousands, as in 1890). The script, quite well and factually translated for film purposes, was by Lewin, while the decadent atmosphere was authentically conveyed by the producer, Pandro S. Berman, who chose to make the film in the now fashionable decadent semi-literary style made popular by Sacha Guitry, of illustrated word-commentary.

The title of both the story and the film is of the essence of decayed, disruptive Romanticism. It is not about life itself, about a living man, but of a picture, the portrait of a man in oils. Life is not primary, but the representation or imitation of life in one of the art forms is primary, while life becomes secondary, according to this decadent and materialist valuation.

The film opens in London in 1886 with a sub-title quoting from Omar Khayyám, "I myself am Heaven and Hell," which is very apt in view of what follows, though there is considerably more of Hell in the film than Heaven. In a jingling hansom cab Lord Henry Wooton is reading *Les Plaisirs du Mal*. The speaking commentary tells that "he loves to exercise a subtle influence on the lives of all." That that subtle influence is exercised exclusively on the side of wickedness is only made explicit in the unfolding of the film. He is on his way to see Basil Hallward, the painter, and as the cabman may have to wait a while. Lord Henry tosses the book he was reading, *The Pleasures of Evil*, with an air of insolent contempt, to the cabman.

The character of Lord Henry Wooton is that of the devil, the Mephistopheles who eventually persuades Dorian Gray to barter away goodness for youth, pleasure, experience, and knowledge. Dorian is giving his last sitting to the painter Basil Hallward, and he wishes he might stay as youthful as the portrait for ever. Dorian regrets that the picture will remain fresh and young while he himself grows older and uglier. Reversing the position in his mind in the familiar manner of paradox he expresses a wish that the portrait might do his growing old and ugly and that he himself might remain young for ever. Lord Henry, the provocateur, tells Dorian that the sculptured cat there is one of the 73 deities of Ancient Egypt and might grant him his wish. There is an earlier incident in which Lord Henry discusses the portrait with the painter, Hallward. Will he exhibit it? The painter replies emphatically that he will not—he has put too much of himself into it. Lord Henry asserts that intellect destroys the beauty of any face. (Paradox again.) Hallward, in refutation, reads and quotes the Life of Buddha. (A curious sidelong expression of the current decadent antipathy towards Christianity.) Lord Henry is extremely suave and "smart" all through the film, with his contemptuous, exhibitionist, paradoxical conversation. For instance:

"A life of deception is absolutely necessary to a happy marriage."

Nothing could be more phoney and untrue than that, but it is quite good enough for the Decadents. Again:

"You shouldn't go in for philanthropy"; a philosophy to which many Shavians have been truly faithful, and as if suiting the example to the word, Lord Henry spots a butterfly on the wing and chases it. He scatters his philosophic gems as he goes along.

"The aim of life is self-development—to realise Nature perfectly—to give reality to every dream."

The aim of life, you see, is not the happiness of others but of self. And as to realising Nature perfectly—what sort of Nature, animal nature or human nature? And is reality to be given to both dreams and nightmares with equal facility?

Chatting away with measured ease, Lord Henry eventually catches the butterfly and transfixes it with a pin, upon the sculptured body of a woman. The implied symbolism is crystal clear. So is the obsession with insects, moths and butterflies in Oscar Wilde's consciousness. The symbolism of the butterfly and the woman being transfixated together is highly suggestive of the known sexual sense processes of the Sadist mentality. Talking away airily with pretentious poise, Lord Henry continues with his patter and *bon mots*:

"Be afraid of nothing."

"Always is a dreadful word. Women are fond of it. They try to make a passion last for ever."

"I never take off my hat except out of doors."

(Deliberate nose-thumbing at respectful behaviour.)

"When one loses one's youth, one loses everything."

(See Shaw's *Back to Methuselah* and J. M. Barry's *Peter Pan*, who wanted always to be a little boy who never grew up.)

And Dorian replies:

"To remain young, I'd give my soul for that."

He does. Notice also the French construction of that sentence. A little later, Dorian Gray, clearly dominated by the philosophy of abandonment proclaimed by Lord Henry, fired by the taunt to dare to live, dare to experience all, and with the notion that the only way to fight temptation is by not fighting it and making a Vichy pact with it, Dorian makes his way to "The Two Turtles" public-house, in the East End. The snow is falling as beautiful Sybil Vane sings "Little Yellow Bird."

*I like you, little yellow bird,
But I love my freedom too,
So goodbye little yellow bird,
I would rather brave the cold,
In a leafless tree, than a prisoner be,
In a cage of gold.*

Again, the negative de Sade view of the world. There is no escape from evil, which is everywhere and all-embracing. The alternatives, the cold leafless tree and the prison-cage of gold, are both evils of a different kind.

In her dressing room, Sybil Vane looks longingly at a picture on the wall of a shining Knight, Sir Tristram, her beau ideal. Dorian Gray, bribing the stage door-keeper, gains admittance and asks Sybil to sing "Little Yellow Bird" for him. She sings, but refuses the money he offers her for singing. As Dorian Gray leaves, he meets Sybil's mother at the other end of the corridor. She apologises to him for Sybil's alleged bad manners in refusing the money and takes it from him herself, with a wink to the doorman as Dorian departs, almost with an air of a procress. This is fundamentally the same as in Shaw's *Pygmalion*; when the dustman Dolittle asks for money from the Professor for his daughter's services. In other words, there is no honesty, no such thing as the tender paternal or maternal instincts or pride in children in the world. That's all bourgeois bunk. In Shaw's and Wilde's philosophy, as among the poorer parents of Japan, parent to child relationships are on a strict cash basis—nothing else.

Dorian admires Sybil Vane for a fortnight and visits her often in her dressing room. Sybil's sailor brother arrives home, dark in countenance and cavernous of jaw. He looks with jealous eye at the back view of Dorian Gray, seated at the piano playing the Chopin Prelude dedicated to the French Lesbian, George Sand. Sybil is puzzled by the music. "It's not happy." "Perhaps it's because he feels his youth slipping away from him." They kiss.

Throughout these sequences and later, the "helpless pawns of fate" motif seems to be strongly underlined and emphasised. King Arthur's knight, Sir Tristram, is often referred to. To do battle against all evil is their knightly vow. The name, Tristram, is very like the name, Trist, in "Captain Fury," meaning sad. In this particular *milieu* it has the opposite connotation to knightly chivalry and is more closely linked to de Sade. Which is only in keeping with the habit of paradox among all Romantics.

Dorian fetches Sybil a canary in a cage, as if in some symbolic reference to imprisonment. He meets Lord Henry again, who says:

"To regain one's youth, one only needs to repeat one's follies."

Again, baiting the bourgeois. Again, the distinctly French construction of the sentence. When he hears that Dorian and Sybil are in love with each other and that they are going to get married, Lord Henry will have none of it. As in Shaw's "Cæsar and Cleopatra," no wedding bells and no babies in Oscar Wilde's pattern of the Universe. No fear. Not on your life. Not gory likely. Lord Henry explains with Mephistophelian precision that since Sybil is so much in love, there is no need to marry her. He pours into Dorian's ear the technique for her seduction. Dorian should invite her to his, Dorian's house, and then when it is time for her to go home, he will tell her to stay and will plead that he cannot do without her. She will obviously demur and then he will excuse himself from seeing her home by saying he hates goodbyes. Then, when sitting at the piano playing Chopin's Prelude to George Sand, he will call out nonchalantly "Let yourself out, won't you," pretending to show complete indifference to her.

Dorian carries out Lord Henry's prescription to the letter—and it works. Trapped by her lover in this way, Sybil does not pass the test of virginal innocence and is then upbraided by Dorian in a letter in which he says the match is off and he will never see her again. Mephisto Lord Henry and Faust Dorian have both done their work well—extremely well.

Dorian takes a look at his portrait, now hung in his reception room and is appalled to find that lines of cruelty round the mouth have now appeared, and he fears that the change may be noticed by others. He therefore takes it to the top of the house which was formerly his own nursery and playroom. There he places the

picture among the dusty relics of his youthful boyhood. The manservant who helps him to do this is discharged so that he may not tell the tale.

Suffering from overwhelming self-pity (it is impossible to describe the emotion as remorse), Dorian sits down to express his second thoughts in another letter to Sybil Vane, in which he says that he will marry her. Scarcely has he done this than Lord Henry Wooton admits himself into Dorian's presence to enjoy the exquisite opportunity of watching Dorian's reaction to the news that Sybil Vane has committed suicide. Lord Henry brushes aside Dorian's contrition and tells him he should be proud of his achievement. No woman had ever celebrated *him*, Lord Henry, by committing suicide for love of him. On the question of remorse and suffering, he expatiates thus :

"Men represent the triumph of mind over morals."

That indeed is the typical pseudo-intellectual of today speaking. And further :

"Think with the Liberals and dine with the Tories."

The suggestible Dorian Gray accepts his triumph in the Sybil Vane affair in the right spirit. The tragedy is covered up to save Dorian any unpleasant consequences, and he goes on in his career in the manner in which he has been initiated by the serpent-wise Lord Henry. The favourite sport of this precious pair, when they are not at their proper vocation of indulging pleasures of their own devising, is to conduct super-clever conversation among society to annoy decent-minded people. The correct description of this citizen-baiting pastime can be given in French : *pour épater le bourgeois*.

The fact that this is French, and the cult of which it is an expression is also French, is no accident. De Sade was not only its principal exponent but also its philosopher, that is, he did what the later Wilde-Shaw school did, invented reasons for justifying what any sane-minded person can see is utterly lacking in reason or rightness.

Coming back to the film, we are shown a gathering of high society folk where we hear a lot of whispered scandal about the private life of Dorian Gray, scandal which is clearly of the kind that was levelled at Oscar Wilde at the time. The commentator says :

"He always had the look of one unspotted from the world."

"But people whispered that Dorian frequented low dens in the distant parts of Whitechapel."

"As he passed, women who had been connected with him paled."

"Clubmen stared and whispered."

Then we see Dorian repairing to a drink and dope den in Blagdon Fields. He passes through this dark and dismal sink of iniquity

and a door at the further end is opened by a grotesque, malformed creature of the Dr. Goebbels type, and we see Dorian ascending the stairs to what are implicitly indicated as far more delectable pastimes than those actually displayed to the audience, but touched upon by the revelations in the contemporary *Pall Mall Gazette*.

Returning home, Dorian retires to the top of the house, which was once his nursery, where he now keeps his portrait in secret, and where he makes secret visits to contemplate the effect of his monstrous "pleasures," not upon his own bodily frame, but upon his portrait. A very convenient arrangement—to appear to the world unsullied by your misdeeds and to pass the buck to a portrait that, somehow, assumes the physical penalties for your sins.

The niece of the painter of Dorian's picture, Gladys Hallward, falls in love with Dorian. One day he goes downstairs to find Gladys seated at the piano, playing "Little Yellow Bird," from the copy of the music upon which Basil Hallward, her uncle, had drawn Sybil Vane's picture at Dorian's party. In this scene the symbol of the statued Egyptian cat is endlessly emphasised.

Gladys tells Dorian she will never believe any evil she hears about him. She says:

"If you had some great trouble, I'd want to share it with you."

Dorian places a necklace of rubies significantly round her neck. Anyone who has studied this degraded form of so-called love will recognise this act as a symbolic substitute for beheading, the jewels representing drops of blood. Gladys' friend, David, is seen coming downstairs from the top floor where, apparently, he was unable to gain access to the nursery. David asks:

"What do you keep up there?"

"Skeletons of inquisitive guests," answers Dorian.

On his thirty-eighth birthday, Dorian experiences a strange sense of fear. He passes Hallward in a fog. Later, Hallward arrives at Dorian's house, explaining that he is going to catch the night train to Paris. It is only just eleven o'clock. (Remember the repeated Nazi obsession with "The Eleventh Hour.") Hallward, trying to save Dorian, tells of the sort of thing people are saying about him. Dorian. He speaks about a certain boy who had been Dorian's friend, who had committed suicide, and asks:

"Why are your friendships so fatal?"

And Dorian replies, coldly and contemptuously. "Am I my brother's keeper?"

To which Hallward returns: "Still, a man can be judged by the effect he has upon his friends."

And he goes on to tell that a certain Lord's wife had made a terrible confession, inferring that Dorian was deeply involved in the matter. Dorian makes a deprecating gesture.

"Is it true?" Hallward wants to know, but meeting the blank countenance of Dorian he sees he will never get the truth that way. "I could only answer if I could see your soul."

A sneer lights upon Dorian's face:

"Then you shall see it—it is your own handiwork." Thus Dorian makes Hallward, the painter of the portrait, the scapegoat for the crimes he himself has committed. He leads the way upstairs for Hallward to see the portrait. Dorian withdraws the veil from the picture. Dorian keeps throwing a dagger at his desk, right in the centre of a heart drawn upon it. Hallward starts back at the foulness and horror depicted, a moral leprosy eating away at the youth which was once young Dorian Gray. It is Basil Hallward's painting. There is his signature still. He sits down on a chair, almost limp.

"This is monstrous—what does it mean?"

Dorian replies: "I made a wish to remain for ever young and that the portrait might do the growing old for me. My wish was granted. The portrait destroyed me."

Hallward is deeply disturbed and says: "Do you know how to pray, Dorian?"

Dorian. "It is too late, Basil. Do you think I haven't tried?"

Basil: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool."

Dorian starts ruminating within himself: "Gladys must never know of this."

But if Hallward leaves that nursery alive, she will know. He feels himself suddenly like a hunted animal. Hate, terror, despair, grip him. Dorian grasps the dagger he was playing with a moment ago and stabs the painter with ferocious fury, in full view of the audience (in distinct contravention of the Hays code). Then the lamp swings dangerously from the ceiling with the rhythm of a clock pendulum, above a child's nursery rhyme, "Little Boy Blue, come blow up your horn." The hand in the portrait drips with blood.

Here we have again a variant of the time concept in another form which is to be found in all Sadistic minds. Time is sometimes linked to age, symbolically with Father Time holding a sickle. Here the symbols are time as a lamp swinging like a clock pendulum linked to the memory of an infant state instead of age, and the murderous dagger instead of a sickle. Notice also how the mind of Dorian, like the Nazi mind, works. "I" made a wish. "I" commit all the crimes under the sun, but "You" have to die for them. Heads I

win, tails you lose. That is the type of "reasoning," a mixture of infantility, imbecility and criminality that condemned millions to the horrors of torture and wanton execution in our contemporary history. This is the type of mixture that we are offered from the shores of sunny California, where nature is most beautiful, most bounteous and most generous with the fruits of the earth.

Dorian thinks up an alibi. No one has heard him come in. He puts on his coat and hat and creeps out of the house. He then rings the bell and an awakened servant appears, to let him in. Dorian casually asks the time, so that it may be imprinted on the man's mind. He goes upstairs to bed.

Next morning Dorian sends a letter to a friend, who arrives at Dorian's house with a countenance troubled and fearful, as if he were coming to face his executioner. Dorian calmly tells him the dilemma in which he, Dorian, finds himself, and the friend, who is apparently an anatomist of some distinction, is blackmailed by Dorian into agreeing to dispose of Hallward's body, when Dorian threatens to reveal some past unmentionable indiscretions to his fiancée.

Throughout this film, most of the wickedness, the Sadistic pleasures, the covering up, is skilfully implied by the commentator, and their true nature is infused into the picture by means of profuse symbolisations of actions, objects and dialogue. The search for the missing Hallward is now depicted by Dorian becoming engaged to Gladys Hallward and joining in the search for her uncle. We gather they have searched in London, searched in Paris, and the police are, as usual, helpless. The suavity of Dorian's behaviour, his apparent concern for the grief and loss suffered by Gladys, slurs over the true nature of his crime. The portrait has borne the brunt of his evil deeds and there is not a trace or a mark upon his own face to betray his corruption. Always suave and polished and utterly guiltless in appearance. While every normal action he performs is normal in form, it is loathsome in substance.

Affianced and married, as it were, over the dead body of her uncle, Dorian Gray can find relief and relaxation in the grief and anxiety of his bride. Grief, not joy, is the essence of their nuptials. He finds constant entertainment in watching the face of his wife, as hope after hope has to be abandoned. Blasting the hopes of decent people by calculated cruelty is already one of his fine arts. When he proposed to Gladys it was round a large dinner table, where a number of people were seated. Somebody says that Dorian ought to get married. And out of the blue, Dorian looks at Gladys, seated next to her devoted friend, David, and asks her to marry him. Dorian fully savours the fine aroma of David's dismay and shame at being so affronted, as the foolish Gladys eagerly accepts. All the world loves a lover, but this sort of love sends a shudder of shame down the spine of normal people.

"*Les Plaisirs du Mal*," and the shades of the devilish Marquis preside over the smallest action of this seion of the Sadist cults. Meanwhile, the sailor brother of Sybil Vane is still searching for Dorian to avenge the death of his sister. He traces him through a visit to Bluegate Fields. An artist sitting there, under the influence of drink or dope, or both, draws a portrait of Dorian Gray as Dorian passes. Something is missing from that pieture. The artist smiles portentiously and draws a gallows round the sketch. This, of course, has no moral significanee. The glorifying of evil and hating everybody malignantly is the mark of the initiated to these cults, as the dialogue at this point plainly shows. This is only a chanee for the artist to set the sailor on Dorian's track. Dorian is caught up by the sailor, and when accused of the crime that happened twenty years before, Dorian, calm and poised as ever, rather mildly ex-postulates and shows his face to the light from the street lamp. He asks:

"How old do you think I am?"

"About twenty-two," answers the sailor, and lets him go.

Frustrated, the sailor returns to the den at Bluegate Fields, and there the Beardsley type artist laughs uproariously at Dorian's get-away. "Twenty-two! Why, Dorian has looked twenty-two for the last twenty years." He prints the name of Dorian's estate upon the wall for the sailor to read and watches the sailor's reaction with gleeful antieipation. The sailor disappears into the darkness.

Dorian is entertaining a shooting party at his estate. Here, again, the nature of the party is symbolical. It is an image of the world as believed in by Sadists. There are those who shoot, and those who may be shot with impunity. Our indispensable Lord Henry Wooton is, of course, present to point the moral and adorn the tale.

One of the party, aiming at what he thinks is a deer, shoots and kills a man. There is consternation, not at the tragedy, but because "it spoils the day's sport." Says Lord Henry: "It wouldn't look well to go on." Dorian satisfies himself that it is the sailor who has thus been conveniently disposed of. This incident happens entirely as if in a dream. We are never shown how the sailor got within shooting range, or how he got there at all. But we do know that it is convenient for the Sadist mind to have the forces of retribution put thus out of mind. The police are baffled—as usual.

Now please observe how the film ends and how the minds of both Dorian Gray and Adolf Hitler worked in perfect unison, the one in literature and the other in the real world. Soon after the shooting party, at which Dorian escaped retribution, but only temporarily (as Hitler had done so often before the final pay-off), Dorian announces he will be going away, and leaves a letter addressed to his wife, Gladys, saying that he will be leaving her. Thus, as in Shaw's play, "*Cesar and Cleopatra*," the man marries a woman, not to live with her, but to leave her. You marry, not as the Bible says, to "cleave

unto her" and to experience joy, increase and the bringing forth of new life, but always with only thoughts of death and murder and destruction uppermost in your consciousness. That is how Dorian Gray married Gladys Hallward, though her friend and guardian had been murdered by his hand only a little while before. There was no question of normal consummation in new life in that kind of marriage, any more than there was a thought of normal marriage in the mind of Adolf Hitler when he married Eva Braun while the ruins and shambles of Berlin were falling about their heads, and when they were both at the very last minute before their own demise. And note, in both these marriages the exhibitionist streak in the minds of the Sadist demanded an audience. There was such an audience at the wedding in the burning Chancellery, and when Dorian Gray dies he, too, must have all his "friends" around him to watch the proceedings as he stabs at the filthy portrait in the frame, and as he stabs it, he himself drops to the floor and dies. Dead, he assumes the corruption, the decay and the moral filth formerly depicted upon the portrait, while the portrait returns to its normal appearance as when it was painted.

And thus died Hitler, reduced to carrion in the flesh, but carried as a picture in the minds of millions of Sadists in Germany today. *To live on as a picture?* To live on to return to torment the world again?

Before you answer that question, ask yourself one more: What is Britain doing with films like "Caesar and Cleopatra," "Blimp," and "A Matter of Life and Death"? Dispelling the spectre of Nazism from the minds of the world's peoples or perpetuating it and keeping it alive? What is America doing to cure the mental ills of the world? Is "The Picture of Dorian Gray" a contribution to world sanity? Is the denigration of a section of British society likely to make for friendship between the American and the British nation? But "Dorian Gray" is only one of hundreds of films, both British and American, that are sowing the subconscious seeds of Nazi disruption. Take as one other flagrant example Samuel Goldwyn's "The Princess and the Pirate," which, judging from the title and from the leading star, Bob Hope, you would think is just a harmless pantomime entertainment.

At the end of the war in 1919, America offered the whole world, then distracted and tortured, a vision of hope, life and brisk cheer in her films, while it was Germany of the Weimar Republic that gave us the future pattern of Nazidom in "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari." At the end of the war against the Nazis, thanks to Mr. Goldwyn, it is America's office to offer us a film as vicious in its sleep-walking Sadism, as feelingless and as paradoxical as anything ever put down on paper or photographed on film by the Germans in 1919. It is America which offers us in Goldwyn's "The Princess and the Pirate" an inn called "The Bucket of Blood," with an actual bucket suspended outside through which "blood" drips upon passers-by, a

town in which murder is permitted under licence, a place where no legality exists, where no man's life or property is secure, where you see men knocked on the head for no reason at all, and other men are stopped and robbed by footpads in the streets, where a woman screams from an upstairs window as an ogre-like ape-man approaches her in a mood of rape and no one comes to her aid, where human heads are cut off and then reduced chemically to the size of walnuts, where one of the rascally, arbitrary, murderous rulers of the community, as villainous as any Streicher, is a man with a hook where his right hand used to be. On this island town, the law of human social life is paradoxically reversed, when we see the man, the active principle, asleep in a boat, while the woman, the passive, the one who should be the cherished and the protected, is the active one, tugging and sweating at the oars, while the sleeper sleeps in the boat. In this town every man is at daggers drawn with every other, and a soft-brained idiot (played by Walter Brennan) is more astute than anybody, where everything that could possibly happen in a horrible nightmare happens, where, indeed, everything that ever happened in the nightmare regime of Nazidom actually did happen.

America, whither goest thou? And what hope is there for the world if films like these are passed without check? The people responsible for making such films have thrown down a challenge to you, to me, to all of us, and to the unborn generations yet to come. If Democracy means anything at all, it means that each of us, all of us, are responsible for what is being done on our behalf. We exercise a great measure of choice in every aspect of our lives. We try to get a job, a home, clothing, food, and opportunities for our families as good and as beautiful as the maximum use of our opportunities will allow. Freshness, cleanliness, health, harmony and self-respect are the marks of a good citizen's home. If we live in towns, the sewerage and dust-bins are taken care of by the municipality. The basis of our family and social life is, or should be, soundness, goodness, responsibility and reliability through and through.

Imagine, therefore, on the plainest common sense basis, the folly we commit in allowing or encouraging, or merely tolerating, any soiling or rotting of the supreme essence of mankind—the human spirit. The human mind, the human spirit, the human soul, the human intelligence—it does not matter what you call it—is what makes a person tick. If we are good human beings, we shall chose always what is good in both physical and mental sustenance, and the bad—both physical and mental—will be put behind us, as Christ, in his temptation, rejected the suggestions of Satan.

The era of atomic power has speeded the urgency to re-cast our thinking on all matters relating to every form of presentation, from school primers to West End stage plays, from newspapers to the cinema and the televised film. We may well regard the new

trinity—atomic power, rocket propulsion and television—with awe, not with awesomeness and immobility, but with purpose and determination. The greater the power—material or cultural—the greater the knowledge and responsibility required for its use and control.

Let us, therefore, reflect upon the sort of men we must breed for this new age of instantaneous televised communication. We are groundlings no longer. We shall need the virtues of Heaven itself to live even safely. Discretion, if not fear, must hurry our efforts to hold in check those evil-minded men who are not even aware that they are evil; men who, living among us and with us in our towns and cities, might, in a moment, eliminate us all—good people and bad alike.

The Sadists, as we have seen in this book, are always mightily concerned with time. They sing about time, and pray for time, and gloat over time in all kinds of symbolisations. Time is what Hitler needed (but didn't get) to win his war. Time is what the Sadists who have survived Hitler cannot, and must not get, for in this atomic age there is no such thing as time—hardly such a thing as space. Are we mentally prepared for this unprecedented revolution in the history of mankind? Are we to sit placidly, aggressor fashion, Munich fashion, Nazi-Soviet Pact fashion, to let the propagation of evil thoughts and evil deeds multiply and flourish in our midst, nay, right in our homes on the television screen? Or shall we each take a hand in strangling the viper before it can wriggle?

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